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EMMANUEL BURDEN

A SKETCH OF MR. BURDEN — FROM MEMORY

# EMMANUEL BURDEN

## MERCHANT

OF THAMES ST., IN THE CITY OF
LONDON, EXPORTER OF HARDWARE

A RECORD OF
HIS LINEAGE, SPECULATIONS
LAST DAYS AND DEATH

BY

HILAIRE BELLOC

WITH THIRTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS
BY G. K. CHESTERTON

METHUEN & CO.
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TO

HERBERT A. L. FISHER

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# INTRODUCTION

THOUGH no prominent citizen is now-a-days permitted to pass "beyond the veil" without an account of him being drawn up for posterity, yet books of this sort have recently grown so common that some warrant for the publication of a new biography may well be demanded.

Mr Burden's public position, combined with his sterling piety and considerable wealth, would alone merit such recognition: to these must be added the fact that he was a Justice of the Peace for the County of Surrey. His connection, moreover, with Imperial Finance has, through the medium of the Press, lent a very general interest to his name even in those parts of London with which he was personally unfamiliar.

I am well aware that the task of writing this history could have fallen into abler hands, but it could have been achieved by no one more devoted to his subject, or more familiar with the final catastrophe of this singularly beautiful and modest life. That I possessed the qualifications necessary for a work of this kind, was so evident to writers like Charles Egton, T. T. Batworthy, George K. Morrel, and Mrs Hooke as to cause them to withdraw voluntarily from a field in which they had already—I regret to say—laboured with some assiduity.

If, in the face of such a testimony, Mr and Mrs O'Rourke persist in issuing their ill-informed and prejudiced version of the last sad months, I fear I am powerless to dissuade them.

I had at first intended my notes for the perusal of friendly eyes alone: to my astonishment, I find them praised almost enthusiastically by two powerful critics (— journalists; valued friends; men whose fingers are ever upon the pulse of the nation), and a little later I learnt

that the Directors of the M'Korio Delta Development Company would not be displeased to see printed such a vindication of their methods as my pen had produced. I was assured by Lord Benthorpe, in person, that no salaried agent upon the daily press, nor any professional author they had employed — not even "Ultor"—had given them the full satisfaction they had received from my manuscript. I, therefore, reluctantly consented to rewrite and publish the whole, with such added embellishments of style and fancy, as a wider public deserves.

It has eagerly been enquired by many clergymen and others whether I had before me a moral purpose in the compilation of this work.

I cannot pretend that I had intended it at the outset to convey any great religious or political lesson to the world, but I will confess that long before my monograph was perfected a conscious meaning inspired my pen. Rather let me put it more humbly, and say that I became vividly sensitive to a Guiding

Power of which I was but the Instrument. Each succeeding phrase, though intended for nothing but a statement of fact, pointed more and more to the Presence of some Mysterious Design, and I arose from the Accomplished Volume with the certitude that more than a mere record had been achieved. The very soul of Empire rose before me as I re-read my simple chronicle. I was convinced of the Destiny of a People; I was convinced that every man who forwarded this Destiny was directly a minister of Providence. I was convinced that the Intrepid Financier, the Ardent Peer—nay, the Soldier of Fortune, whom twenty surrenders cannot daunt—had in them something greater than England had yet known.

To such convictions the reader owes those snatches of hymns, those citations from the sermons of eminent divines, and those occasional ethical digressions which diversify and enliven the pages now before him.

. . . . .

Of the form of the book I have little to say. Type, paper, and binding I left to the choice of specialists, as did I also the impagination, the size of the margin, the debate as to whether the leaves should be uncut, and the proportion of public advertisement requisite to a merited fame.

The proofs I read myself.

The question of illustration was discussed at some length. An excellent photograph of Mr Burden was unfortunately discovered to be the property of a firm who had flattered him by making it a complimentary portrait during the last short period of his public fame. They demand for its reproduction a sum I have certainly no intention of paying. No other picture of him exists save a faded daguerreotype taken many years ago on the occasion of a fancy dress ball. It represents Mr Burden in the character of Charles I., and seemed to me wholly unsuitable.

The principal characters connected with the M'Korio have, however, con-

sented to sit to a mutual friend, and his sharp if rapid impressions of their strong features coupled with a few sketches of Mr Burden, drawn from memory, will aid my readers to a fuller comprehension of my work.

My thanks are due to Messrs Marian, solicitors, who procured for me the best advice of counsel upon passages since omitted ; to Mr Banks, Lord Benthorpe's butler, who has provided me with much of my material. To the anonymous author of "A History of Upper Norwood" ; to Mr English, sometime editor of *The Patriot*, now manager of "The Feathers" Tavern, Greenwich ; to the Master of St Barnabas College, Oxford ; to the chaplain and especially to the porter of the same college ; to Mr Carey employed at St Catherine's College, long a servant of Mr Cosmo Burden's ; to Lord Garry, to Mr Tammin, to Mrs Gough, to Charles Parker, Henry Grimm, Peter Cowdrey, C. T. Knowles, T. Cummins, Loring, Gibbs, Hepton, Rubble and Tuke, and to many others

of lesser note who will, I trust, accept this general recognition in place of a more personal expression of gratitude.

The MSS. and correspondence which have reached me from all parts of the world have been of the utmost service. I cannot congratulate myself too warmly on the receipt of Mr Barnett's blotting-pad which his office-keeper had the courtesy to retain for me. The autograph letters from Prince Albert and Baron Grant to the first Lord Benthorpe have proved most useful material; his grandson, the present peer, who figures so prominently in these pages, was good enough to sell them at an astonishingly cheap rate to a gentleman who was my agent.

Such notes, memoranda of obligations and short agreements as have reached Mr Cosmo Burden through me, he is indeed happy to have received, and he begs me to render thanks for him most heartily in this place. I am further to assure all who read these lines that any further scraps in his handwriting that

may be received—especially any letters addressed to Miss Capes — will be warmly and substantially acknowledged.

It will be noticed that I have alluded throughout these pages to Lord Lambeth under his original name as Mr Barnett. The public are more familiar with him in this form, for Barnett is and remains the name he has rendered famous; and, moreover, his acceptance of the Peerage was not announced till half this edition had been struck off. I have his permission for the retention of his simple English surname. Similarly I speak throughout my work of the Right Rev. the Right Honourable,[1] the Lord Mauclerc, Bishop of Shoreham, as "the Rev. the Honourable Peregrine Mauclerc." The death of his lordship's

[1] The phrase used by "Asterisk" in the *Daily American* of April 9th has no meaning. *Very Rev.*, *Very Honourable*, are titles that cannot exist in combination. As to the "*Most*": "*Most* Honourable, *Most* Rev.," of "Clara," in the *Evenudg German*, it is not impossible, but is here inaccurate. His Lordship is not a marquis, nor has he any intention of ascending the steps of the Archiepiscopal throne.

brother, and his own induction to the See of Shoreham, occurred too late for me to make the requisite alteration.

. . . . .

One word more.

I trust I have nowhere forgotten that delicacy in mentioning the private affairs of others which is the mark of the gentleman.

If I have spoken strongly of Mr Abbott, it must be remembered that a patriotic duty has claims superior to those of convention: moreover, Mr Abbott has himself made a verbal declaration of the strongest kind, accompanied with an oath, that he is indifferent to my opinions.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the unhappy difficulties of the Benthorpe family, on which I was compelled (however reluctantly) to touch, are of no further moment, since young Mr Benthorpe has wooed and won Antigua, the only daughter of the Count Brahms de la Torre de Traicion y

Crapular, a Spanish nobleman of immense resources.

For the rest, I have throughout striven earnestly—and I believe successfully—to avoid giving the slightest pain to any sentient being.

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the great God who loveth us,
> He made and loves them all."
>
> —COLERIDGE

Or words to that effect.

CHELSEA, 1904

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# MR BURDEN

## CHAPTER I

IT is remarkable, and a little saddening, to find how few people have heard of Mr Burden, who recently died at his residence, Avonmore, 37 Alexandrovna Road, Upper Norwood. He was, all his life, a man whose influence, though indirect, was considerable ; a man certainly not without weight in the foreign policy of this country, and one that affected still more profoundly its social structure.

The assiduity and the regularity of his demeanour forbade him, perhaps, the notoriety that is so prized by many lesser men. His ambitions, where they were not domestic, regarded his business and the preservation of the fortune he had honestly acquired. His judgment, which was excellent, he exercised upon problems connected with the commercial interests into which he had been born, and from which he had never, during a useful life of sixty-four years, desired to dissociate himself.

To the administration of the suburb in which his villa was situated he was far from indifferent;

but he had never attempted to enter the House of Commons, though his station, means, and connections would have afforded him ample opportunities in middle age for a career which Englishmen justly regard as among the most honourable, lucrative and eminent.

Such men, happily, exercise, under the orderly conditions of modern England, a far deeper influence upon the fortunes of our great empire than their lack of public fame might argue in less favoured communities. It would be an impertinence to insist upon the many friendships which bound Mr Burden by the closest ties to men who direct no small part of our national fortunes. To those who knew him well it would appear redundant, and, to those who had not heard of him, beside the mark, were an account of all his financial, philanthropic, or religious activity to occupy any part of the following pages. Those pages were called forth under the strong and painful impression of his recent death, and it is their only object to trace a rapid sketch of his family and social position, to make some mention of the last few days of his life, and at the same time to leave some permanent record, lest the memory of such a character and of its trials should perish.

The name of Burden is first seen in the beginning of the seventeenth century, when a

Henry Burden appears in the court rolls of Beccles, in Suffolk, in connection with sundry sales of wool to Ghent.

It is not certain whether this Henry was an ancestor or no; but within ten years the name twice reoccurs, once in the form of Burdyn, and once in that of Bird.

A receipt presented at Bungay, dated in the year 1616, when our Shakespeare died, and acknowledging payment for wood used in burning a witch, bears the signature Barton: and a deed of 1638 conveys and devises 47 hogsheads of mild ale to Zachary Pyorden, who is later known for a zealous defender of the public liberties.

It is interesting to note that a Master Barreden sailed for Holland from Yarmouth, in company with some fifteen or twenty of "God's servants," shortly afterwards, with a large and very valuable cargo of wool. He was presumably a nephew of the foregoing. There is a family of Bourdons in Bradford, Mass., who, though claiming a Canadian origin, are very possibly descended from this early champion of religious liberty.

No mention of the Burdens during the Civil Wars remains. We may imagine them, if we will, following the Parliamentary cause; whether passively—as did so many of the

sturdy East-Anglian stock—or actively; accepting the wage, and loyally fighting the battles of the great Protector. However that may be, the name reappears with another John Burden in 1672, a religious enthusiast who preached the Word to the people of Saxmundham during the hot summer of that year.

He seems to have been an honest God-fearing man, devoted to the cause of true religion in the first period of his ministry.

A government which could permit the entry of the Dutch into the Medway, and produce the infamous shorthand notes of a Pepys, did not tolerate the mystical zeal of Bunyan's contemporary. He was thrown into Ipswich gaol, on his release from which place he proceeded to Aldeburgh, and declared himself the Messiah—at some time between April and June 1684.

Few believed him, but he suffered nothing further from the authorities, and died peacefully in the occupation of cobbling, at Orford, on the 5th or 6th of January 1701/1700.

The race of Burden is then lost sight of for nearly a century. There is almost certainly some connection between Mr Burden's ancestry and that of Sir Algernon Burden, of Pelham Thorpe, near Norwich, for Mr Cosmo Burden

(Mr Burden's surviving son) has recently borne the same crest as the baronet.

The College of Heralds, who, under the able direction of Lion d'Or, have accumulated these details at a considerable expense, trace continuous filiation from John Burden, whose mother may have boasted gentle birth, and who established himself as a corn chandler at Colchester in the year 1785. John Burden, confining himself strictly to the wheat market, drove a prosperous business in Colchester during the Napoleonic wars. His subscriptions to the charities which were so necessary in those times of high prices and public famine appear no less than six times between 1801 and 1815. He was an Alderman of his town, and died in 1833, leaving a son, George Burden, whom he had established as a large ironmonger at 106 Thames Street, in the City of London, and who was the father of the remarkable Englishman this memoir commemorates.

Mr George Burden, of Thames Street, married on March 8th, 1835, at his parish church of St Catherine's, Jane Elizabeth, the daughter of Ezechiel Cranby, a shipmaster of Wapping. The union was blessed with two still-born and eleven living children, of whom my own friend, the Mr Burden with whom

these pages deal, was the third, born on January 19th, 1841, and baptised the next day under the scriptural name of Emmanuel.

As is so often mysteriously the case with even numerous families, the name of the Burdens survived in but a single member. Of the three other sons, James, Thomas, and Cranby, the first died while yet a child; the second was drowned at sea as first mate of one of his grandfather's vessels; and the third, whose intellect had always been deficient, did not long survive his thirtieth year, but passed away, unmarried, in Dr Milford's private home at Reading. Two of the sisters also perished in tender years. Of the five that survived, Charlotte and Victoria remained unmarried, Patience was early left a childless widow and retired to Bournemouth, while Esther, who wedded a wealthy Australian in June 1865, sailed with him to Melbourne some months later, and has never since been heard of by her family.

The youngest, however, who was christened Maria, but was known in the family as "Baby," made, when barely twenty-six, an alliance with the younger son of Mr Arthur Worthing, of Worthing Court, Bucks. This marriage, whatever social attractions it may have offered to the younger members of the household, proved unfortunate. Her husband was dissipated and

MR. BURDEN'S NEPHEW, HILDEBRAND WORTHING, WHOSE INHERITANCE OF GENTLE BLOOD SADLY UNFITTED HIM FOR A COMMERCIAL LIFE

improvident and encountered repeated difficulties in the society of Boulogne sur Mer, in France, where his father-in-law supported him on a small pension for some years. After the premature death of his young wife in 1873, he returned to England, led a random and useless life among his old associates, but had upon his deathbed the satisfaction of knowing that his brother-in-law (Emmanuel) had paid the greater part of his debts, and had renovated his wife's grave in the Protestant cemetery of the French seaport town where she lay at rest in God's acre. Hildebrand, the only fruit of this marriage, was placed as a clerk in the office of Bowler & Co., by Mr Burden—for he was ever solicitous of the honour of his blood.

At the suitable age of thirty-one, Emmanuel Burden, who was thus destined to centre in himself the greater part of his father's fortune, married a lady for whom he had felt an unvarying attachment, and to whom he had indeed been engaged for some eight years.

She was a person of modest but engaging demeanour, the fourth daughter of the Rev. Harward Sefton of Hagden Courtney, in the county of Huntingdon, and of Miriam Davis, his wife; from whom, perhaps, Mrs Burden inherited her power of rapid calculation and

her acute judgment of human weakness. Mr Burden's father, while fully accepting his son's choice of Eliza (for such was the lady's name), was wisely opposed to an improvident marriage, and deemed it prudent to make the young people wait until his son had thoroughly learnt and taken on the business he was to inherit in Thames Street.

Their courtship, though protracted, was peaceable and happy. They learnt to know each other fully in the long walks which they would take together over Hampstead or Putney heaths. Their families even permitted sometimes a more intimate intercourse. Young Mr Burden (as he then was) would receive his affianced wife in the social evenings of his father's house (they then resided above the shop in Thames Street) or, in turn, would appear as an honoured guest from Saturday to Monday at the Rev. Mr Sefton's vicarage: taking the train from Liverpool Street at 1.15 on the former and returning to town by the 9.20 from Hagden Courtney upon the latter day.

They were married, as his father had been, at St Catherine's. Miss Sefton had accepted the hospitality of her aunt for the occasion. Rice was thrown;—and a shoe. Jests were exchanged. The 'honeymoon was spent in Wales.

Mr Burden, senior, judged it well that the newly-married couple should take, on their return, a house at some distance from London. His business had largely increased; the first floor had already been invaded for some years by the wares necessary to a show-room, and the whole premises should properly have long been given up to the storage of his goods and the accommodation of his offices. Mrs Burden, senior, had died during the engagement of her son, and so at last it was arranged that a new household should be formed on the heights to the south of London, where the fresh air and larger spaces of the country could be combined with the exigencies of a daily train to town.

Mr Burden's father decided therefore upon Norwood.

The suburb was indeed somewhat changed since the reign of George IV.; but nothing could obliterate the charms which still clung to it in the mind of the old man. In deference to the wishes of the bride, he consented to purchase a property in a somewhat new and outlying portion of the Ringwell estate. He settled upon a half acre of land, whereon a new house already stood awaiting a tenant. It was surrounded by gravel paths and newly transplanted shrubs, several of which had died. Though it still stood isolated in the

midst of bare land and fields it already bore the number 37 in Alexandrovna Road, a circumstance which lent an additional pleasure to its acquirement. Some slight debate arose between the old father-in-law and young Mrs Burden as to what the name of the new domain should be; the former favouring the designation of "Chatsleigh," the latter that of "Avonmore," which last, in graceful deference to her wishes, was finally painted upon either gate in white letters picked out with green, upon a grey ground.

The house stood high, and commanded, upon fine days, a view of London to the north. Many familiar points in the landscape attached Mr Burden's father to the memories of his laborious and successful life: the shot tower, St Paul's, and the roof of Cannon Street Station were clearly visible; and he had but to turn his gaze to rest it upon the Crystal Palace, to which the memories of Prince Albert and Hyde Park, his natural patriotism, and a sense of the magnificent, made him incline with pleasure.

His father having thus installed them in a commodious and modern residence, took up his abode with Mr Burden and his young wife. Still maintaining his full proprietorship in the business in Thames Street, he would at

first visit the premises from time to time, while he insisted that his son should leave punctually for town by the first train after breakfast, and at evening discuss with him the business of the day and whatever matters of general interest might have appeared in the morning paper.

Certain of the old man's habits would have jarred upon a man and woman of less regular habits, or possessed of less self-control than were Mr Burden and his wife. Thus he had taken, of a sudden, a considerable interest in gardening, a matter upon which neither of the young people felt any great concern; he became weather-wise, and he was forever fetching in an artizan whom he patronised, to rearrange those bells and hinges, wherewith his son and his daughter-in-law were already perfectly contented. A more serious difficulty was the attachment which Mr Burden, senior, unexpectedly conceived for the policy of Mr Disraeli; whereas young Mr Burden could not disguise his loyalty to Mr Gladstone, a sentiment in which his wife supported him with a zeal only tempered by her repeated references to the Irish Church.

Indeed, when Mr Gladstone's windows in Harley Street were broken by a mob, nothing but Mr Burden's filial piety restrained him

from rebuking the excessive glee of his now aged father; and when Mr Disraeli was promoted to the peerage and offered a golden wreath by a co-religionist, Mr Burden went so far as to take Mrs Burden to the seaside for a week, until the storm should have blown over.

It would be unjust to insist upon these trivial inconveniences. The respect due to his father's years was soon enhanced by Mr Burden's anxiety for his health. In the January of 1880, Mrs Burden having by that time given birth to three children (their grandfather's delight and pride), her husband, who had long become the sole head of the great business in Thames Street, had the pain of seeing the old man take to his bed, whereon, some eight months later, he very peacefully expired.

It needs but little space to follow the existence led by Mr Burden after this revolution in his fortunes; for it is the purpose of these few pages rather to record the impression of his own much more recent demise, and to leave some record of his character, than to follow at any length the history of his life.

The three children, Ermyntrude, Cosmo, and Gwynnys, were trained in those excellent

MRS. BURDEN AT THE AGE OF FORTY-THREE
FROM A MINIATURE

traditions which the family had inherited for now three generations of decent affluence; but Mr Burden and his wife justly considered that the steady increase of their fortunes (which they naturally ascribed to their considerable capacity, but which were perhaps, more due to the evolution of modern industry) permitted them to entertain some legitimate ambitions for the future of their offspring,

Certain developments in the structure of our English society made it increasingly difficult to continue the custom of taking high tea at half-past six. This meal had already been supplanted by a set dinner at the more fashionable hour of seven, when Mrs Burden introduced the change whereby her two daughters, aged respectively fourteen and twelve years, were withdrawn from Mrs Cathcart's seminary at Dulwich, and put under the care of a private governess, a Miss M'Kee, of whom Mrs Burden had heard from a friend who was intimate with the niece of Lady Bagshawe.

Thanks to the able guidance of this lady, Ermyntrude and Gwynnys very rapidly acquired an acquaintance with all that best suited the part they would be called upon to play in their social rank. A thorough knowledge of German, some elements of French, and a good grounding in psychology and practical nursing, left them

at the ages of eighteen and twenty all that charming, simple English girls should be.

They came out together (for Ermyntrude looked, if anything, younger than her sister) at the Jubilee Ball given in the Town Hall of Sydenham in 1897.

Mr Burden had never disguised his intention of portioning his daughters. The elder was soon married to a young doctor of considerable ability, who emigrated with his wife to Winnipeg, in which distant capital he still pursues a prosperous career. Long a president of the Orange Lodge[1] in that city, he was recently returned to the Dominion Parliament on the Manitoba Catholic schools question ; his career will doubtless be familiar to many who may read these lines.

Gwynnys, on the contrary, during a visit to her sister in Canada, married, somewhat abruptly, Karl P. Legros, a dark young officer in the local army. The captain (for such was his rank) was unfortunate in his business of butter-brokering. He became involved, through no fault of his own, in the collapse and subsequent trial of the Milwaukee Butter-King. Driven by the mysterious instinct resident in all scions of our race beyond the

[1] Also a P.M. of the A.O.B., V. of the T. S. and Third Illuminate.

SPIRITUAL ANXIETY OF [illegible]
AN IMPRESSION FROM THE PENCIL OF A FRIEND AND PASTOR WHOSE HOUSE HE WOULD FREQUENT FOR THE SOLUTION OF DOCTRINAL DOUBTS

seas, Karl P. Legros sought England in the hour of his need; nor did England fail him. After a short period of hesitation, and, it must be confessed, of some spiritual anxiety, he took Holy Orders, and was soon installed, by the efforts of his father-in-law, as rector of the small living of Benthanger, in Kent. He has continued, for many years, to fulfil the duties of his sacred calling in this place, and has been supported unwaveringly throughout a life of arduous and unremitting labour by his noble and devoted wife; a true Christian matron, to whom her father made, till his death, a small yearly allowance.

Mrs Burden was laid to rest less than a year after Gwynnys Legros' return to England. She had the satisfaction, before dying, of hearing that Ermyntrude's husband had been elected to the Parliament of his colony, while her visit to the vicarage of Benthanger had at once consoled her with the vision of her daughter's content, and permitted her to breathe the atmosphere of her early years: the sober comfort of a country parsonage to which, for all her wealth, she had so long been a stranger.

This excellent woman sleeps in the Cemetery Park of Norwood, in a dry, roomy, and well-built vault which, with the exception of a yearly

rental of five guineas, is the unencumbered property of her husband's family.

Having thus described the fortunes of the two daughters, it is my duty to indicate, however briefly, the youth of their brother, Cosmo. His participation in the last efforts of his father's life, and the fact that he became, after the mother's death, his father's sole companion, make it necessary to follow the young man's training, if we are to comprehend the failing spirit of which he was so long the unique support and comrade.

Cosmo had never enjoyed such health as had his sisters. The first months of his life had been marred by the use of an artificial food improper to the sustenance of infants, but honestly recommended by the old family doctor, who had so firm a faith in its virtues as to have accepted an interest in its sale. One effect of this nutriment was to make the child large and heavy beyond his years, a physical characteristic which he preserved throughout his life. It had also, however, the result of weakening his heart, and permanently impairing his digestion. From these causes he developed as a boy a nervous and irritable temper, which his parents thought it imprudent to correct. When he had passed through the excellent discipline of an English Public School, these

MRS. BURDEN
AN INTERPRETATION BY MISS MCKEE, LONG A GOVERNESS IN THE FAMILY

faults disappeared in his general demeanour, and were observable only in the occasional friction that inevitably accompanies the incidents of home-life ; abroad they were replaced by a certain indolence and indecision of manner, far preferable to the peevishness which had formerly given his family so much anxiety and pain.

As a boy of ten, when his sisters were barely out of the schoolroom, he was placed in the preparatory school of Dr Stanton at Henley.

Many as are the applications for admission to this fashionable establishment, and difficult as it was to find room for the boy, Dr Stanton had far too much sense to hesitate upon his reception, or to consider for one moment the slight difference of social position between Cosmo's family and those of the bulk of his pupils. The excellent divine was of that new and vigorous school in English Pedagogy, which rightly regards the great commercial activities of the country as co-equal with its territorial interests. The name of Burden was already familiar to him, not only from the enamelled advertisements in blue and white which frequently met his eyes as he paced the platforms of the Great Western Railway, but also from the part taken by Mr Burden in the

Mansion House reception of the Sadar of Nak', when that potentate was visiting England during his late embroilment with the Russians.

The schoolmaster was, therefore, delighted to receive Cosmo, and permitted the delicate boy certain extras which the parents of the more robust of his pupils saw no occasion to command. These included a plate of cold meat at breakfast, and a weekly visit from Dr Byle, an old and valued friend of the schoolmaster's, and the medical attendant of Lord Bannering of Marlsford Park.

Careful as was the training which the boy received at this excellent academy, his life was not happy; he recovered somewhat in the refined atmosphere of Radley, but it was not till his entry into the University, towards the age of twenty, that his life began to assume a normal aspect.

The wealth which he would inherit, his reserved and self-centred temperament, his readiness to meet men of all kinds, and his detestation of friction and quarrel, save with those nearest to him, deservedly secured him a number of friends of that sort which is most prominent in our national life. He was a member of the Club, he could ride without discomfort, and though not himself attracted to any games save golf and hockey, he was the

associate of men who were distinguished in whatever the University has to teach.

He possessed, to a remarkable degree, that art of compromise upon which the characters, not only of our statesmen, but of our commonwealth itself are based. He had an instinct for the feeling of his peers; and, if a certain lack of energy forbade him to attempt to mould his contemporaries, he was at least able to receive with remarkable fidelity the general impress of the forces around him.

Though not proficient in the pastime, he was yet able, upon occasion, to write verse; and his style in prose, which, as a Freshman, had been somewhat inchoate and abrupt, very soon developed that "viscosity which is more potent than fluency" (I quote the Bishop of Shoreham), and that "power of condensing truth into metaphor" (I quote the same authority) which distinguishes our modern English from the less plastic manner of the earlier century.

Indeed, there is little doubt that, had he turned his attention towards politics, or (what would perhaps have suited his nature better) the Church, he would have found, after a little experience of the outer world, every opportunity, as he had every qualification for success.

In the School of Modern Languages he carried off, after four years' study, a Second,

which was very near to being a First Class. His father, my friend Mr Burden, already sufficiently gratified by his son's success, was assured by his tutor in a private letter I have myself seen, that Cosmo only failed to obtain the highest distinction from a curious inaccuracy in the spelling of Latin quotations, "a subject," as this careful and popular young Don[1] very properly remarked, "alien to the spirit of the School."

At this period of life Cosmo had grown to the manhood which his youth had promised. His frame was soft from that fault in his early nutrition to which I have already alluded, but his careful grooming, his constant and regular shaving, and his close curling hair, gave an impression of alacrity. He stood over six feet in height. This stature was of little advantage to him, save with first acquaintances; it very probably developed a weakness of the heart, and a persistent supineness of demeanour which, with an intellect less trained, might have gravely affected his life. His features were somewhat devoid of meaning, the mouth especially: indeed he found it difficult to control a looseness of lip and expression, which marred what would otherwise have been a well-set face; but he boasted a healthy colour,

[1] Mr, now the Rev. S—— Fafner.

red, white, and, in our colder seasons, blue. The contour of his nose was not accentuated. His eyes, which were of a pale grey, were restless, and seemed always to betray a certain anxiety. These, added to his cleanliness and heavy gait, must complete a picture which should be framed by the judgment of the Master of his College: "Whatever else he is, he is a gentleman."

Those whose interest in Mr Burden has proved sufficient to carry them thus far in my relation will excuse, I hope, the insistence I have laid upon Cosmo's character and early life. It was through his son that my friend Mr Burden came into touch with those forces of the modern world, which might have been of such value to him, but which proved so fatal. It was Cosmo's facility and social character which had made him the intimate friend of Charles Benthorpe, for example, of the Master of his own College (a man most marvellously able to estimate social influence of every kind),[1] and especially of Mr Harbury, whose consider-

[1] The Master of St Katherine's is nowhere more vividly portrayed than in a phrase of the late Duchess of Buckingham's, in her book of reminiscences, 'The Life Serene' (Bischoffheim & Co., 31s nett, 3 vols., cr. 8vo, uncut, with 8 photogravures), vol. iii., p. 127, "He was what I call a *good* man." There is a charming description of her grace's visit to the University town. She passed the night at the Magpie.

able public reputation, though he is not directly connected with the University, is in itself the best recommendation that can be given to his University friends.

For Mr Harbury had not only known Cosmo, he had sought to know him; and in the multitude of Cosmo's acquaintance there was no one, except perhaps himself, who did not understand what an honour and what a passport such a friendship would become.

COSMO BURDEN
FROM THE ONLY PHOTOGRAPH WHICH ADEQUATELY RENDERS
THE RESTRAINED BUT PERMANENT SADNESS OF HIS FEATURES

## CHAPTER II

IT is never possible to assign to any one cause a great catastrophe. It is even difficult to pick out the strongest of the many threads which go to weave a destiny. It is, perhaps, because I knew him so well and was so shocked by his recent death, that I find this difficulty peculiarly apparent in the case of Mr Burden.

It is necessary, however, to make a beginning, and I would beg my readers to consider one of the earliest sources of that tragedy, the unfortunate entanglement into which his son, Cosmo, fell while yet an undergraduate. This entanglement had, indeed, the effect of earning Cosmo the lifelong friendship of such men as Mr Barnett and Mr Harbury, but it proved indirectly a deathblow to his father.

Hints and suspicions have magnified and distorted a story simple enough in itself, and one which in its bare truth throws no dishonour upon the young man whose whole life it has embittered. He may himself read these lines. He will (I am sure) think it no treason

in his father's friend, if I set down briefly and exactly facts, the misapprehension of which alone would injure him. Indeed, it is necessary that I should do so if a comprehension is to be had of what follows.

There lay about eight miles from the University a village of the name of Mallersham. Like Wynthorne, Gapton, Rupworth, Bilscombe, Gorle and many others, it is the most beautiful in England: its cottages and peasants have about them an indefinable air of security and content, and are the property of the Howley family.

Before the recent national invention of the bicycle, Mallersham was a place of resort for the wealthier undergraduates; it retains the character to this day, nor is the annual dinner of the Brummel Club held elsewhere than at the Malden Arms.

For, of course, Mallersham was originally Malden land, and the sign of the inn is a touching example of the deep roots which our English families strike into the soil. For though the Gayles, who sold the estate to the Howleys last year, had originally purchased it in 1857 from the Marlows, who were heirs by marriage of the Hindes, yet the Hindes themselves had bought it from the Kempes of Hoverton, whose early efforts in finance bring us directly

through the Rinaldos to Geoffry Malden, the famous soldier husband of Maria Van Huren, the witty Dutch companion of William of Orange.

When Cosmo was at the University the Malden Arms was held as a tied house by a family of the name of Capes, whose only daughter, Hermione, grew to inspire Cosmo with an immature and temporary, but profound, affection.

It is no purpose of these pages to make excuses for the lad. The example of Athletes, who often mentioned and praised the daughter of the inn, may perhaps have led away a temperament easily impressed by the customary or the fashionable. Nor was the powerful stimulus of universal and incessant rumour the only attraction Hermione wielded. The young woman herself could partly furnish cause for Cosmo's passion. She was some nine years older than he, a circumstance which lent to her conversation with the youth of the gentry and middle classes a charm of experience and arch intelligence rare enough under the conditions of her birth. She was of a large and commanding presence, her manner was active and determined, her step vigorous. Her voice, which was somewhat loud and unpleasing, was redeemed by features in which the conventional prudery of her rank had long been vanquished,

while her eyes, remarkable for the length and darkness of their lashes, had achieved a fixed expression of confident affection.

During Cosmo's fifth and last year at the University, the young people met, if anything, more frequently than before. Mr and Mrs Capes put no obstacles in the way of their growing intimacy, and, towards the end of what his father well designated his "career," Cosmo had the incredible folly to open with Hermione a frequent and regular correspondence.

Some lawyers have maintained that this correspondence contained as many as seven distinct expressions equivalent to an offer of marriage. It is a matter upon which I can express no opinion. Nor would I dream of adding, by an impertinent discussion, to the chagrin which a man of Cosmo's sensitive temperament cannot but experience if he should read these lines. What is certain is, that when the time had come to sever his connection with the Malden Arms, these letters took on an aspect of their own.

He had seen Hermione for the last time (as he hoped) upon a Wednesday towards the end of term. A natural reticence had forbidden him to break it to her that they would not meet again; he had affected in every recent visit an increasing carelessness of demeanour, and had attempted to drag out this final inter-

view to so dull and purposeless a conclusion as might properly let die a wearisome attachment. He neglected in nothing those artifices by which a man of refinement and honour softens the pain he may be compelled to inflict. I record it with the utmost pleasure of my old friend's son, that he showed such true delicacy in the crisis of this lamentable story.

But her woman's instinct, aided perhaps by a more general acquaintance with such matters, forbade Hermione to be deceived. Her tenderness increased with every conversation, until, in this last, it became a kind of assiduity whose tone repelled the young man, and lent him, if possible, a yet stronger determination to be free; with her protestations of affection, her enquiries and her detailed reminiscence, was commingled a perpetual record of his cherished letters, of their place in her heart, and of how they seemed to keep him with her always.

He recalled them as she spoke. He could find nothing in them to warrant so extravagant a devotion. There were many recent notes excusing his absence, many earlier ones of appointment; he remembered not a few written from abroad, longer letters full of description. They reflected, of course, his regard; but he could not understand the large part they had played in her simple life, nor why they formed

in these days the staple of her fond and persistent memories.

He was troubled and returned on the morrow.

The letters loomed larger than ever across the sunset of their loves. On the Friday (for in his anxiety he came daily) her conversation was of nothing else, and when he showed plainly how insignificant he thought them, she offered to read him the passages that had most comforted her. She whispered their purport and drew closer to him as she told it.

Then indeed this topic, which had at first only wearied and annoyed, grew to alarm him. He dared not withdraw. He came again and again : on the Saturday, the Sunday, the Monday ; he no longer avoided the mention of these documents, or turned her away with careless replies. On the contrary, they seemed suddenly —by I know not what morbid possession of his delicate mind—to be of even greater moment to himself than to her. He would have touched them, held them, borne them away with him. She only refused, with a look of possession and pride in her eyes.

Tuesday and Wednesday offered no solution, Thursday was dangerous, and Friday sombre.

In this final phase of their duel, he had at last determined upon a desperate solution of what had grown to be a menace ; he would tell

her frankly that they must part; it followed that he would receive his letters, and he hoped, by the aid of that tact which he justly believed himself to exercise, to prevent a scene which could only be painful to them both.

With the afternoon of Saturday he set off once more to the Malden Arms.

His spirit as he went was oppressed and confused. I have said that Cosmo was and is (if he will forgive me the phrase) pursued by the accidents of his childhood. His body, too bulky and too slow, suffered from the necessity of these daily journeys; their inconclusive irritation preyed also upon his clear, but retiring mind. For no reason, save that care breeds care, and that his general tone had fallen with the strain of these days, he saw his future blackly as he went wearily up the hill of Mallersham in the summer evening.

A healthy man of his position and inheritance does not consider his debts, for instance; he himself had never given them a thought till now; he had seen them vaguely at the back of his mind, two or three hundred pounds (£250 was the figure at which he averaged them in more careful moments):—he had dismissed them for more immediate things.

But this evening their list seemed interminable! His father's hearing of them, which he

had put off to some future moment of success or necessity, seemed suddenly grown terrible —a thing not to be approached. He recalled this and that obligation which were almost matters of honour, and he got colder as he recalled them. He began to imagine how men whom he knew spoke of him in his absence. He felt as it were enmeshed and held, though hitherto no such imaginary follies had oppressed him in all his youth—so much can one note of friction enfeeble all the soul.

In a wiser moment he would have known that rasp and depression of this sort would weaken him in negotiation. It did indeed weaken him now when he met Hermione. He so conducted his demand that a woman of less strength might have been guilty of a quarrel. She fell to no such weakness. She told him what she had told him a hundred times—all that his letters were to her. If he himself chose to begone, she would retain them as the only thing remaining to her.

In all this her voice was finely self-possessed, she spoke as of a property in land, a fortune; and as she did so, discovered an unexpected exactitude and dignity of demeanour. She seemed—perhaps from affectation—unmoved by his sudden gesture and his assurance that he would not return. The letters were still

her theme, and their nature, or at least her interpretation of them, were the last words he heard from her lips as, much more clearly than he wished, she still called after him across the twilight. He would not turn his head. He left her and pushed homeward, taxing his strength unwittingly, and attempting a desperate hope that she would indeed so cherish his writing that he should hear neither of it nor of her again.

He reached college in utter weariness. June was not yet ended; the weather was still cold; he lit a fire for company, and stared at it for an hour or more, in that terror of the future which will oppress men of his temperament upon any considerable accident.

His large, fair, Viking body seemed to grow weak and to sink upon itself, as he sat there tortured by thought. His face, though heavy, was too young for this care to alter it; but all energy had disappeared from his eyes: and his brain, in a kind of lethargy, sought no solution.

The letters and his debts, his debts and the letters, mixed in a confused nightmare. He sat up as though determined to shake off a mere obsession, and to seek refuge in reality.

He took a sheet of paper on which he had written the heading "Saxon Origins." He wasted perhaps thirty seconds gazing at this, then he put his pen through it, and began to

draw up an alphabetical list. He could remember no creditor in A——. There was Barlton, the tobacconist; . . . he could think of no other "Ba," except Bazeley, and "Baz" comes after "Bar." So he wrote "Barlton" down at the top of the paper. Now how much did he owe Barlton? He had a vague idea in his head that it was something over thirty-three pounds; indeed, he seemed to remember the figure quite clearly. He wrote down "33." Then, to satisfy himself more fully, he went to a drawer, and by good luck hit upon the bill before he had looked ten minutes; there it was, "£33, 14s. 7d.; but it was nearly two years old. He pondered, There seemed to float before his mind another bill—more recent; he could not be at the pains of seeking it. He "averaged" his present debt to Mr Barlton at £55. He scratched out the 33 and wrote "55" —he was not so far wrong; Mr Barlton had his name on his books for exactly £58, 19s. 6d.

Then came Bazeley. How much did he owe the Bazeley stable? He certainly could not be bothered to look up all these details; he knew about what it would be. It would be about sixty, or, say, seventy pounds. He would write down "75" to be on the safe side —and he was. For Mr Bazeley, who was a poor hand at book-keeping, had written

out a bill at random that very afternoon, and this bill, after some thought, he had put at £73, 15s. 9d., an addition which he had simplified by the formula, "Act. rendered."

Cosmo was searching mentally among the "B's," and had found Belper—say, twenty-eight pounds, when he suddenly remembered Bailey the Bookbinder. The bill was a small one, not more than four or five pounds at the outside—say six—but it annoyed him because "Bai" comes before "Bar." He squeezed it in at the top and went on with his work. Within an hour, after many erasures and transpositions, he had completed the "B's." There were sixteen of them, for B is the commonest of initials; still, there were sixteen. They came between them to a trifle over £300, did the "B's." He was turning to the letter C with a heavy heart, when he suddenly remembered two "A's"—Alfred the photographer, and Aiken, of whom he had bought the saddles. He took up a fresh sheet to make a new list, wrote down their names, and then angrily crumpled up the whole and threw it into the fire. What could all this do for him? He owed five hundred, perhaps six—probably nearer seven—call it seven. . . . Anyhow he had the prospect and the power of paying. . . . But as he looked fixedly at the paper, burning

before him like an expiation, a lumbering step came up the stone stairs without, he answered a heavy uncertain knock, and there entered something of more moment even than his debts: the considerable form and purpose of Mr Capes.

He had his hat in his hand and bore a sapling to walk with; his gaiters were muddy and so were his heavy boots; but he was dressed in his best, his scanty hair was very carefully oiled, and a fine new comforter adorned his neck. He came in with respectful hesitation, and stood a moment near the door.

Cosmo stood up at once. "Come in, Mr Capes," he said, "what is it?"

"Why," said Mr Capes slowly; "thank you, sir, it's just a little matter. . . . I"; and here he looked down at the carpet and followed the pattern with the end of his sapling.

"Come up to the fire and sit down," said Cosmo. "Have something."

It was a nervous peculiarity of his, common enough in our Universities with their years of arduous study, that he could not keep his eyes on anyone's face; but he spoke cheerfully enough. Mr Capes came up and sat down by the fire.

"What do you drink, Mr Capes?" said Cosmo.

MR. CAPES
(A CHANCE STUDY MADE FOR THE PUBLISHERS OF "RURAL ENGLAND," NO OTHER PORTRAIT WAS OBTAINABLE)

"Claret wine, thank you, sir," answered Mr Capes.

Cosmo brought out some College claret and poured it into a tumbler. Mr Capes took a gulp of it; his expression changed and he put it down again.

"Would you rather have some port, Mr Capes?" said Cosmo anxiously.

"Thank you, sir," said Mr Capes, "I don't care if I do." There was an assurance beneath the deference of his manner which Cosmo could hardly bear in silence. As he stood and poured out the port for Mr Capes in his easy chair, he said, "Well?"

"Well . . ." said Mr Capes, holding his glass poised and staring at the fire . . . "I've been talking to my 'Ermione"; he pronounced these two last words as though they were but one, and he put into them a very mournful emphasis.

"Now I know what you're going to say, sir," he went on, putting up a large wooden palm, while Cosmo kept his lips tight and drawn; "I know what you're going to say, an' I say nothing. . . . I don't want *to make any unpleasantness*—but there! . . . my poor girl!" He shook his head up and down, and then from side to side, still gazing at the fire.

Cosmo sat quite silent with his hands clasped

before him. He was under a considerable strain, and every word that fell from Mr Capes increased the strain till it became almost intolerable.

Mr Capes continued his monologue in the very tone and with all the pathos of a street preacher. "She's told me all, sir, she has. Quite straightforward; she always was that!" He wagged his head again from side to side, and then up and down, "and all I can say is," —his voice rose, he turned round and faced Cosmo squarely—"you owe her some compen-sa-tion." Having said that with a victorious scansion, Mr Capes brought one open hand down smack upon the table, and then with the other very carefully put down his empty glass.

He had expected Cosmo to speak, but Cosmo only rose and filled Mr Capes' glass. Then he sat down again, still silent with compressed lips.

Mr Capes, like all men whose eloquence is natural and untaught, found transition in speech a very difficult matter. He began to repeat himself a good deal. He said twice that Mrs Capes agreed with him, and insisted at least four times that he did not want to make any unpleasantness. He uttered the profound truth, that his Hermione would never be the same again. And at each pause he still

made it clear that he understood Cosmo's position, he still maintained his attitude of respect, and he still came back to the only solution that had presented itself to his rustic mind. And still through this torture Cosmo was silent.

Mr Capes was not ignorant of affairs. He had often purchased young pigs for fattening, and would do, from time to time, a little horse-jobbing. He perceived that the matter of the bargain must be touched if this scene was ever to find an end.

"There are a few little things of hers, perhaps you have by you, sir. I know there was that pop'lar history of the war she lent you for the maps; a rug and a brooch she says you had—she does. Now if *you* send these back by *me*, why, it'll be fitting like; and then I can bring you back some few things of *yourn* what *she* has; there was a pin, I know, and a book of something, and all your letters and all; if I bring all that back to you, sir, why *that*'ll be fitting too, so it will—and, of course," rather more firmly, "such com-pen-sa-tion as is fitting also."

Mr Capes was standing as though to go. Cosmo also stood, his eyes cast down and something like decision in his low voice.

"What do you want?" he said.

There is nothing in the world of business more difficult to estimate than the sum of ready money which the son of a rich man may have at his disposal at any moment. Legally he has often nothing; practically he may have anything at all. The problem is doubly hard for a father whose judgment is confused by the image of a beloved and injured daughter, and handicapped by grave imperfections of early training. Mr Capes had only one thing in his favour—he had made up his mind and he was free from hesitation. He had made enquiries some weeks ago of a tobacconist and an ostler, and his honest mind was too robust for indecision.

"Seven hundred and fifty pounds," said he. Then he added, by way of rounding off the crudeness of the figures, "and not a penny less!"

Cosmo had been desperate for at least twenty minutes: there had rushed through his mind scheme after scheme. In the last resort an appeal to his father—flight, even, if nothing was left but to fly. He could not bear this interview a moment longer. He would dare anything.

"Come here, to this room, at eight to-morrow evening and you shall have it," he said.

"To-morrow's Sunday," answered Mr

Capes, with a touch of reproach in his hard breathing.

"Ten o'clock on Monday morning then," said Cosmo in better control of himself—"and —Mr Capes, will you have some more wine?"

Mr Capes drank a conclusion to that evening: pleased with Cosmo's consistent courtesy (he had come prepared for worse), pleased with his own great tact, pleased with the simplicity of himself and the world; the whole mellowed by so much port as almost drowned in him the memory of his poor child and her irreparable loss.

That night Cosmo did not sleep; he heard the rain falling on the flags without, and it mingled with his despair. Towards five, the broad daylight wearying him beyond words, he fell into a deep, unhappy slumber, in which he neither dreamt nor was refreshed. It was past midday when he woke. He dressed as carelessly as may be, breakfasted, and spun out all the hours of the afternoon in silence, imagining nothing, seeking no issue. He could not even read. There had fallen on him the dead spirit which very often falls upon men in their evil hour, and especially upon men by nature heavy and unalert. With the evening he wandered round to the club, purposeless and blank; but as he came into the main room

he saw Mr Harbury reading in one of the deep chairs, and the sight comforted him. For Mr Harbury's very appearance suggested the world of methodical action, decision, and ordered things.

Mr Harbury, who was to play so large a part in Cosmo's life and his father's, was a man such as our manifold Empire alone produces.

He was tall and cleanly made, his dark hair, just touched with a metallic grey, lay close to his head, his features were very regular and hard; his nose was thin and slightly curved. It possessed the more character from a flat downward turn at the tip, as though some one had tapped it gently with a hammer. His mouth especially was firm, and two strong lines, as though of a slight but just and permanent contempt, flanked it upon either side. The bronzed colour of his skin, his long, clear eyes well wrinkled at the corners, the decision of his step, all spoke of the experience of travel and of a balanced and ready knowledge of men.

He was a silent man. That modesty which is the chief charm of our race in its highest governing type was so ingrained in him, that he had been heard in the last four years to speak but twice of his family or of his own adventures. The short and sufficient notice

which he supplied to books of reference told the world that he came of good Lincolnshire stock, and indeed the arms which appeared, small and decent, upon his silver, were those of the now extinct Harburys of Lanby ; it was presumably a cadet of this family who had established himself as a merchant in the Isles of the Levant two generations ago. There, acting, we may suppose, as a chaplain or missionary, Mr Harbury's father had taken Holy Orders, but at what period in his life, and whether in the English or Maronite communion, is unknown. Old Lady Maring has told me that she thinks it was he whom she once met in her father's office when he was Consul at Smyrna. For the rest, the few lines dedicated to Mr Harbury's life in "Who's Who" tell us that he has visited Persia and Afghanistan, that he is very familiar with Egypt—on which province of the Empire he has written many articles in the *Times* and the *Financial News*—and that his favourite recreations are shooting, fishing, yachting, golfing, hunting, pig-sticking, polo, and travel. He has also several clubs : among others the *Devonshire*.

Men of this stamp cannot but influence upon every side the destiny of our Race ; the nature of their activity is not easy to define, but it is apparent and beneficent, His power certainly

did not consist in mere wealth—indeed, Mr Harbury's fortune, the decent competence of a Levantine clerical family, cannot have exceeded a hundred and fifty thousand pounds—but from his pleasant home within a short distance of the University he radiated, as it were, through twenty different departments of Imperial life.

The more serious organs of the Press, from the *Times* to "M.M.M." (*Money Makes Money*), regarded him as a specialist upon Imperial problems; he would leave England some three times a year for Africa or the near East; he had lectured upon the fauna of Socotra; he was the friend and associate, in a sense, the *link* between those very varied types of administrators, soldiers, and financiers, who between them build up that which the world has not seen since Rome decayed. Two men who would mutually suspect or despise each other—for example, a somewhat narrow though upright general officer, and a brilliant and daring speculator—would each be friends of Mr Harbury. Mr Harbury knew how to use what was best in each for the common good of England. Lord Hayshott—a man by nature contemptuous of finance; Sir Jules Barraud, of the Canadian Copper Syndicate and the Anglo-French Quick-silver Group; Henry Borsan, of

MR. HARBURY

Leeds; Mrs Warberton, who perhaps had more influence in British East Africa than any other white woman; were each indebted to him for services and friendship. What is more significant, it was Mr Harbury who had first pointed out to Mr Barnett all that the University meant to the Empire; how through the University the Empire could best be trained to its last ventures, and, I believe—no one can prove it—that the idea of the Mercantile Scholarships was Mr Harbury's rather than Mr Barnett's creation. If Mr Barnett was at that moment the guest of the Principal of Barnabas, it was Mr Harbury who had introduced him to that new world.

With the name of Mr Barnett, however—a name which calls up to all Englishmen affairs of far greater moment—I am touching upon the principal subject of these few pages: that unhappy misunderstanding concerning the M'Korio Delta, and its fatal issue for Mr Burden, my friend. Let me leave these to their proper order, and return to Cosmo in his despair.

Mr Harbury knew Cosmo and liked him. He wished to know and like him better. He saw in a moment into what mood the young man had fallen, and he guessed at once—if not the exact cause of it—at least the general nature

of Cosmo's necessity. He saw "money" there quite plainly, like a written thing.

Cosmo attempted conversation and failed. Mr Harbury threw his paper to the floor and turned a trifle towards him.

"Burden," he said.

"Yes," said Cosmo.

"Dine with me to-night."

"I'm not fit to dine with anyone . . ." said Cosmo, and as he said it he mentally added 700 to 750, and rose uneasily and then sat down again, leaning back with his hands dropping listlessly on the arm of the chair.

Cosmo prided himself—and justly—upon his reticence: but then Cosmo had never been tortured till now . . . he said to himself that Harbury was an older man . . . he knew him for a silent and a wise man . . . he looked at his companion, a side-long look, and said, blurting it out as though to get it over, but putting on the conventional smile wherein very inexperienced men of breeding hide all extremity and confusion:

"I've got to make a payment to-morrow at ten o'clock—and I must spend my time looking for it—but I sha'n't find it, Harbury. It isn't there, you know." Then he paused, glad to have found words of a virile flippancy.

Mr Harbury wanted to laugh, but he looked grave. "How much, Burden?" he said.

"I didn't sleep all night," answered Cosmo savagely.

"Yes—but how much is it?" pressed Mr Harbury with patience.

"Oh! . . . It doesn't matter—so long as it's out of reach, anyhow."

Mr Harbury was decisive:

"It's never any good mentioning the *word* money unless you speak of exact sums," he said. Mr Harbury knew what he was talking about, and Cosmo's hesitation began to yield: he wavered a moment, and Mr Harbury sat quite still, as fishermen do over dark smooth waters at evening.

Young men are often timorous in the presence of great sums of money; they do not understand the modern ease and fluidity, the come and go, of wealth.

Cosmo rather whispered than said, "A thousand."

Mr Harbury smiled, so spontaneously and so brightly, that he seemed for a moment hardly older than Cosmo himself.

"My dear fellow . . .!" he said. "My dear fellow."

Then his smile broke into an honest little

laugh. He sat up in the deep padded chair and put one hand upon Cosmo's knee :

"Is that what has been worrying you, Cosmo ?"

Cosmo Burden started at the noise of his own name. He had taken Mr Harbury's popularity for granted during full four years, but he had not quite understood why that quiet, dark-haired man had made so many friends, nor why he had lost none ; why, living at some distance, travelling much, appearing only as a visitor or guest, he had increased his value till he seemed a kind of centre for all that counted most in the University. He knew now : Mr Harbury had used his travels ; he could help.

Mr Harbury also felt a kind of gladness at the same moment ; for he knew that he had gained one more friend, and friends to all such men are (if we only knew it !) the dearest part of the comfort they so easily attain.

He said it again, laughing in the goodness of his heart :

"Is that what has been worrying you, Cosmo ?"

"It is enough to worry about," said Cosmo. He said it with his head still down, and he said it miserably. But there was hope in his voice.

Mr Harbury lay back in the attitude of a man wearied by repetition.

"There are fifty men who would give it to you within the next two hours," he said.

Cosmo, who had read many books, shook his head with a certain firmness, answering:

"I am determined not to borrow from my friends."

Then he got up, and walked towards the window, and gazed out into the rain with that expression upon his face upon which depends the manliness of our youth.

Mr Harbury looked at him as he stood those few feet off in the grey light, with his face averted. He turned in his mind all that he knew of men embarrassed, of young men who did not know the nature of the world, and then he said quietly:

"I will let you have it myself."

But Cosmo repeated the phrase he thought best:

"I have already told you, I will not borrow from my friends," and he deepened the expression of manliness, and stood quite firm where he was. Mr Harbury was genuinely impatient.

"Then borrow it in the regular way," he said, "but whatever you do don't get a sum like that on your nerves . . . people are so funny about money when there's any hurry. . . ."

Then he turned round sharply and cried:

"Good Lord, it isn't worth all this fuss.

Borrow it from some regular man—De Vere, or Ashington, or Massingberd, or somebody. . . . They know who you are."

"I know what happens when people do *that*," said Cosmo, for he had read a thousand things; and then he added, "*Sixty per cent.*," as though it was a kind of secret password, showing him to have a vast experience of mankind.

In spite of his good nature, Mr Harbury was almost angry with a young man aghast at a thousand pounds, using fine phrases and bringing in the 60 per cent. of the police-courts and the novelists; the 60 per cent. which farmers pay, and poor widows, and insignificant officers of the line, and men hiding, and all who have no backing.

"Cosmo," he said firmly, so that he made himself obeyed, "you say this man is coming at ten to-morrow. I will come at nine and bring you the money—in notes, mind you—in notes. Then, since your nerves are in that state, we will go up to town and I will take you to Ashington. I know him as well as I know you; he will lend it you at 15 per cent. at the very most, and I will see that he does it; and if you must clear your mind, you can pay me then. Sixty per cent.! Oh, Cosmo, Cosmo, what a lot you have to learn."

Cosmo waited a little, as they do in story

books, and then Mr Harbury saw by his face that he had consented, and Mr Harbury laughed again a clear laugh, and put his hand upon his shoulder, and Cosmo, from whom certainly a great weight had gone, asked him where he was dining, and said he would come too.

At Mr Harbury's dinner, half academic and half political, Cosmo met a group of those men who are in the very core of our lives to-day, and who principally direct our State and its great destinies, and heard in silence the Master of Barnabas, Charles Gayne and a dozen other people who were arranging the new Mercantile Scholarships; Professor Ezekiel K. Goode, Ph.D., was there, the creator of Hylomorphism as a system of thought-being; and next to him there sat a man named Ragge, whose mother had done a great work in the East End.

But especially he noticed at the other end of the table the large and ponderous face, the dominating gesture, and the lethargic eyes of a man whose very name betokened something great; it was Mr Barnett, upon whose direction the scheme depended. And that evening he heard also for the first time, casually mentioned, a phrase that was to have great power over his life—the Development of the M'Korio Delta. He heard it appearing and reappear-

ing at intervals in the conversation, as fire-flies dart in and out of trees.

. . . . .

Next morning Mr Capes came, still respectful and still determined. But Cosmo's manner was all renewed and strong: he met Mr Capes with a vigorous, sharp manner that astonished him, and spoke the first words loudly:

"You know what I think, Capes. It's blackmail. You know that as well as I do. He pulled out the money as he spoke. "Where's your packet?"

"I don't like to be spoken to like that, sir," said Mr Capes.

Cosmo in his relief insisted more strongly.

"I can't help that, Capes; you must hear it now, for I hope never to see you again. It's blackmail. I said I would pay it, and I will keep my word; but it's blackmail, and it shall be remembered against you till I die."

Mr Capes was foolish enough to say at this point, that he hoped there would be no unpleasantness.

"Count them," said Cosmo.

Mr Capes took the notes and turned each carefully over as though he feared a trick. Then he ran through them again by the aid of his great thumb, which he put to his mouth

from time to time as he counted half aloud. He was satisfied.

"You owe it us, sir," said he slowly, "certain you do."

Then he put the price of a comfortable life into his pocket-book, wagged his head sadly, and brought out from his tails a package wrapped up in a very dirty old newspaper. He unfolded it and produced an inner packet tied with a thick and greasy string, and Cosmo sighed slightly as he felt his own hand on the envelopes, and took back the letters and with them his peace of mind.

"I hope,"—began Mr Capes.

"I don't want to have any more words with you, Capes," said Cosmo, trying to set his mouth, and still speaking with depth and loudly.

"Oh! very well, sir," said Mr Capes respectfully, "very well, sir," and he moved slowly to the door and shut it after him very gently, as he had ever been taught was good manners. And Cosmo heard his shamble on the stone stairs, and felt as though peril had gone with him, and as though in some way his own manhood had returned.

He took the packet and had just untied the string, when his eye caught the clock, and he saw he had barely the time to meet Mr Har-

bury at the station. He put the letters into his desk, locked it, and went out free.

. . . . .

That morning Mr Harbury took Cosmo to town, to Jermyn Street; and there the two went up a flight of stairs and came to a door which bore, on a brass plate, the name of "Ashington."

There was a decent clerk of middle-age writing at a desk. He came forward courteously, and took from Mr Harbury's hand a note which was addressed to his master. It was to introduce Cosmo and himself, and to tell their business, The clerk came out again at once. He first bowed out a very old man, a client whose hands were shaking, and then bowed in through the green baize door the two new visitors. Then he shut the green baize door, and Cosmo, in some awe, sat down and looked about him.

There was a large table with two novels upon it, and a great inkpot, and two silver candlesticks, and a piece of sealing wax, and a lovely little statuette of Napoleon in bronze. There were also some letters upon the table, and two envelopes waiting for the post. And, sitting at the table, was a little elderly man, with kind keen eyes and a kind smile, but coughing and weak in health, who blinked his

eyes and twiddled his mouth as he spoke. And when he spoke he had another nervousness, which was to repeat his phrases; and he began by saying:

"Well, well," and then he said it again, and smiled and added: "it's very simple, Harbury, it's very simple. I suppose that this gentleman is of age?—is of age?" He looked kindly again at Cosmo, and added: "is of age?"

Cosmo said that he was twenty-three. He was afraid it might have been bad form, or he would have mentioned birth certificates and proofs; but this statement appeared enough; he was astonished at the ease with which these mysterious things were settled in this new great world which he had never known.

The little old man got up, walking with knees rather bent, and with short steps, saying:

"I'll get a form, I'll get a form, Harbury; I'll get a form." And he went to another door at the end of his little room.

In the silence Cosmo looked at the walls, he noted their taste and comfort: the excellent English mezzotints of Italian workmanship, and the air, in every subdued decoration, of harmony with the English air and manner, the old dignified English quarter in which this English house had been built two hundred years before. His mind was still upon these charming char-

acters of security and repose, when Mr Harbury said to him quietly and with a smile:

"Cosmo, I have asked for £1250. . . . I am determined that you shall have something in hand; you must have your mind quite free . . . when the work you may have to do begins."

And Cosmo did nothing but smile in answer a little sadly, and nod once or twice.

Then old Mr Ashington came toddling back, put on gold spectacles with great elaboration, laid the form on the table by Cosmo, and, bending over it, followed down its few clauses with his delicate white finger, and Cosmo read them, murmuring their words; and then old Mr Ashington said:

"That's where you sign; that's where you sign; that's where you sign." And Cosmo signed, and the thing was done.

[illegible] GEORGE HAMPTON, [illegible] AND EXPLORER
(FROM A SKETCH VERY KINDLY COMMUNICATED BY THE ARTIST,
HIS SISTER, LADY OGNA HAMPTON.)

# CHAPTER III

THE M'Korio Delta lies, as its name implies,[1] at the mouth of the M'Korio river.

This protracted and beneficent stream was first seen on the 10th July 1863, by the noble-hearted Garry, who, coming across it in the rainy season, and mistaking the character of the waterway, christened it "Lake Coburg." He crossed it, and pursued his way without discovering his error.

It was next visited (unless we accept the very doubtful story of Van Arlst two years before) by the intrepid Matherson in 1867. Matherson had the misfortune to cross it in the middle of the dry season, and was wholly unaware of its importance. On his historic map, which is still preserved by the Royal Geographical Society in Burlington Gardens, the spot is marked with the words "pools here"; and there is a marginal reference to a carrier, recently converted to Christianity, but devoured in this neighbourhood by a crocodile.

[1] " . . . As its name implies," Butterworth's "Geography of the Empire," p. 224.

The true discoverer of the river, the first to recognise its nature and to map its course was the saintly Basingstoke, a pupil of the N.K.C.B.

Basingstoke was very probably born in Murphy county, N.S.W., on the river Thames a few miles above Tarára. On reaching England he did what his right hand finded to do and displayed in several houses a devoted and God-fearing manner which earned him a written character from his last master, Mr Heck, of the Lindens, Fulham. Armed with this he passed to the Continent, worked for some time in what is now the Grand Hotel at Assisi and so encountered the chief adventure of his life.

It was due to a recommendation from this hotel that Basingstoke started from Naples in March 1873, in the company of an Italian named Mucciani, who boasted some foreign title or other, and was possessed of ample means.

This man died; how and where will never be known, for in the awful days of fever that followed nothing but a most exceptional valour saved Basingstoke himself from destruction. We have it in his own hand that "he had no conception where he was or what he did," and that the clothes and personal effects of Mucciani (which it had been his business to brush and clean) were "lost in the period of delirium."

But, he finely adds, "I must succeed; I know when God is on my side." The phrase is typical of the man's true humility, and helps us to understand his power.

The blacks put an absolute trust in him. Just above the Harra rapids (below which point the Italian notes on the map are first misspelt and then cease altogether) he was compelled to shoot two of his carriers for prevarication—to call it by no harsher name. The whole company fled into the woods, and he was left alone with one man, Mahmoud, whose devotion had in it something of hero worship. They had no weapons left, save one rifle, fifteen cartridges, and a heavy whip; all these Basingstoke, as the stronger of the two men, carried without complaint to the journey's end. Roped together, lest they should lose touch in the thick brushwood, these gallant fellows stumbled on, till they emerged at Háli (or Gambetta as the place is now called) more dead than alive, and received aid from a friendly tribe who knew and trembled at the English name.

Miracles, if one may use the term with reverence, were worked for them upon their journey down the river from this spot to the coast, a hundred and fifty miles away. At one place their canoe was surrounded by a clamour-

ous horde of natives, who were silenced by the reading of that magnificent passage, Genesis xxxvi. 22-28 inclusive. At another they were pursued by a she hippopotamus of enormous dimensions; at a third they dared not land for fear of lions; at a fourth they touched at a native village in the very nick of time barely three hours after the death of a mighty serpent. Upon reaching the mouth of the river they had every reason to fear that they would be fired upon by a Portuguese gunboat. Basingstoke quietly stretched his white handkerchief upon a reed; the emblem was recognised and he passed in safety. Three days at sea exhausted their provisions. Basingstoke has recorded the generous struggle between himself and Mahmoud and told us in unforgettable language how the servant slid into the water by night to save his master.

Many of us can still remember his reception in Europe, his plea at Exeter Hall for those millions whom he had found in darkness, his decoration by the King of Italy, and his successful lawsuit against the family of Mucciani.

The end of this great man is less well known. Years after, when unfortunate speculations had dissipated his considerable fortune, he returned to Gambetta, but he only returned to die. His life was wasted. The valuable

deposits of mineral oil, upon which he had pinned his hopes were already in the hands of a foreign concession. His heart broke. He lies buried in a field just outside the limits of Gambetta, under a fine monument bearing the simple inscription :

*C. M. Basingstoke,*
*Born at Beatrice, N.S.W., on the 6th July* 1841,
*Educated at the Mason's Orphans' College, Clapham,*
*Died Jan. 6th,* 1895.
"*I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer upon the earth.*"

It is to Mr Barnett's honour that he paid for the monument, which is of Cornish granite inlaid with plain black. The whole is of British workmanship, designed in Battersea by one of the Chelsea artists, executed in Camberwell, transported by the well-known firm, B. L. Jowel & Co. of Holborn Viaduct, shippers, etc. It was set up by Burroughs. Photographs of the same are to be obtained of Mr Gale, 742 Strand, and a tablet has been erected in Westminster Abbey by American subscription.

After Basingstoke's great effort, several travellers appeared in succession in the M'Korio valley, and completed his work. Each entered after incredible exertions through the Kuru gorge ; each descended the river to its mouth, bearing his life in his hands, each survived, and each published a book upon his

return to England. Bayley Pasha in 1876, the indomitable Higgs in the same year, poor Lord Charles Hampton in 1878-79, and "Hell or Glory" Powell, in 1880, achieved the exploration of the country. These, together with a few rather noisy continental claimants to similar honours, were the pioneers. Sir Henry Jeorz signed the first treaty with the Noyo of Naya in 1882, thereby overriding the previous arrangement which that sovereign had signed with some German adventurer. Next year a similar footing was obtained in the town of Saràka and the surrounding district by the genius of Captain Ronald, who deposed and exiled the Alemami, forbade polygamy, put down the slave trade with a rigorous hand, publicly burned the Sacred Umbrella, and was on the point of executing a Belgian botanist, when news of his exploits reached England, and he was suddenly recalled by the Secretary of State for War, a personal friend who had long mourned him as dead.

Ronald was given an excellent post, and has since enjoyed all that public repute and a wealthy marriage can afford, but the error of his recall was the beginning of a series of official blunders, which all but forfeited the fruit of so much private heroism.

So long as Mr Gladstone continued by his

CAPTAIN RONALD
(BY THE KIND PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER OF
"RULERS OF MEN")

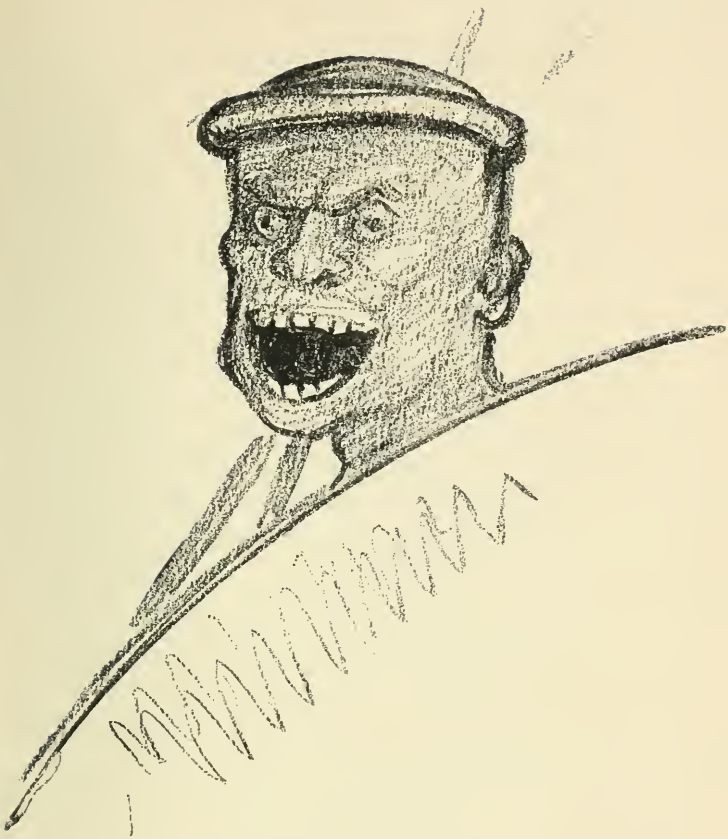
marvellous personal influence to concentrate English opinion upon parochial matters, the valley of the M'Korio remained upon the map as British territory ; it was taken by our neighbours and rivals to be in some vague way attached to the British Empire, the Portuguese claim to the settlement at the mouth of the river was tamely submitted to arbitration, upheld, and finally bought out for the monstrous sum of eighty-three thousand seven hundred and forty-six pounds. A few stations scattered along the eleven hundred miles of the stream, each occupied by a mere handful of troops—these and the missionary enterprise peculiar to our race alone maintained the prestige of Great Britain.

With the great national movement of 1886, this dangerous and unworthy state of affairs came to an end. A Government which comprehended the meaning of the word Imperial proceeded to the partition of Africa. So far as the M'Korio was concerned, that partition was marked by a majestic simplicity. The whole of the right bank was recognised as falling within the sphere of influence of the French, with whose acknowledged possessions in Africa these districts ultimately merged. The whole of the left bank, right up-country as far as the Cameroons, was similarly adjudged

to Germany. We retained for our portion no useless shadowy sovereignty over the immense spaces of the interior, but the solid and tangible possession of the Delta. The future may yet show that we there established our power over one of the most valuable territories of the earth.

This Delta has a frontage upon the sea of some 145 miles. It is contained between two main branches of the river, which meet at a distance of about ninety miles from the coast; but, as is nearly always the case in such formations, the M'Korio also finds its way to the ocean by a very great number of smaller channels.

By no means the whole of this province is permanently under water. There are several considerable islands of firm earth, sufficient to afford sustenance for a sparse but combative population which is split up into some five or six distinct tribes, but is known to the surrounding natives under the collective name of the Yaba. The reduction of these our fellow-citizens, "half devil and half child," would probably have proved too heavy a task for any troops save those who had been trained in our own magnificent and permanent school of colonial warfare. As it was, a short campaign sufficed to establish that *Pax* which the commander in his despatches cleverly termed *Britannica*. Before the month of December



A "MORO-KANU," OR MEMBER OF THE UPPER CLASS OF THE YABA THIS CLASS POSSESSES MOST OF THE LAND, AND OBTAINS ALL THE POLITICAL DIRECTION OF THE DELTA. INDEED IT IS FROM THEIR DOMINATION OF A CLOSELY ARISTOCRATIC POLICY THAT THE PRINCIPAL HOPES OF AN IMPERIAL EDUCATION OF THAT PROVINCE DEPEND

1887, the army was able to re-embark upon the *Princess Mary*; its task was accomplished.

The rising of 1888 was more difficult to deal with, and that of 1889 (which may be regarded as one with the disturbances of 1890) put the local resources of our power to a very severe strain. Three officers, seven white non-commissioned officers, and no less than 120 native troops perished of fever before order could be finally restored.

The rebellion of 1891 was a small matter, purposely exaggerated by the unpatriotic section of the House of Commons, and by the jealousy or ignorance of the Continental press; indeed, for three full years no military operations were necessary, and even the armed disaffection which appeared in 1894 could hardly be dignified with the name of a rising; while the obscure movement of 1897, of which we heard so much in this country, appears to have been little more than an outbreak of inter-tribal bickering, which it was our easy duty to suppress.

The general upheaval, which began in January 1900, was a far more serious matter. The temporary difficulties which we were then experiencing in the south of the African continent were not without their re-echo in the central north, and, ludicrous as it seems, the Yaba may

have thought, in company with more serious competitors, that a term had come to our national mission. They were undeceived. Difficult as it was to spare men, a sharp campaign, lasting into the first months of 1901, and unfortunately neglected in the noise of greater events, finally pacified the country. At the same moment the Delta was formally annexed and a governor appointed.

With the rebellion of 1902 it is not my purpose to deal. The event is too near us in time to permit of an impartial estimate, while the disturbances of 1903 have not yet been reported upon, and those of 1904 are but their sequel. Moreover, the events with which this chronicle has to deal date from an accident prior to this last campaign. That accident was the presence upon this coast of Mr I. Z. Barnett.

It is time that I presented to my readers a presentment of this remarkable man with whom so much of the following pages are concerned.

It may seem an impertinence in me to do so. His name is familiar enough to the whole world for such a description to seem superfluous. It must be remembered, however, that I have frequently come into personal contact with his genius, that he was for some months the financial guide of the dear friend whose record I desire to establish, and that he would—had

that friend's weakness permitted it—have remained his guide to the end. Indeed, the just description of this great Builder of Empire is a duty which I owe, not only to the memory of Mr Burden, but to Mr Barnett himself. He has furnished me with many of the materials of this work, and he will be the first, not only to endorse, but to applaud my confidences.

Mr Barnett's offices in Broad Street are well known to everyone in the City. Under the name of the M'Korio Delta Development Co., they are, as Mr Barnett has himself strikingly put it in the *Intellectual Review*, "a household word." They occupy, of course, Nos. 73, 75, 77, 79 and 81 of Golden Square House. It is not so generally known that, under the business name of the "British and Levantine," they stretch over Nos. 83, 85, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 97 and 99 of the same building. Five rooms of the ground floor (under the name of Bury & Co.) and a considerable part of the basement devoted to the XXth Century Wine Company are in the same hands.

But this position was not immediately reached. The brain and the manhood which were capable of such an achievement merit a brief biography, were it only to show by what virtues of steadfastness and application our country has come to stand where she does.

Mr Barnett was born at Frankfort a/M., somewhere between June 1840 and March 1845. In youth he must have been strikingly handsome. A photograph, taken at Mayence in 1863, shows us a mass of black crisp hair, glittering eyes, promising a singular depth and power; full and somewhat sensuous lips, comprising between them a mouth of immense tenacity; a broad, high forehead of a startling paleness; and a nose of that full pendulous type which is invariably associated with organising ability and staying-power. The prominence of the cheek betrays some strong potentiality for emotion; but it is especially the attitude of the whole figure that indicates the mind within.

The young man is shown supported by a small pilaster, in the German manner of the period. The right hand is thrust negligently into the pocket of the trousers; the left grasps, in fingers of a certain obesity, a book which we believe to be an English Bible. . . . There is something further — something which a written description can hardly convey, but which carries one away as one gazes at the magnificent coloured enlargement which hangs to-day in the hall of Mr Barnett's house in Charles Street. . . . It is an impression—a conviction rather—that this man is in some in-

LORD LAMBETH (MR. [illegible])
FROM THE PORTRAIT BY SIR HENRY MOSELEY, R.A., K.V.O.

scrutable way linked with the fate of England. Such an assertion in cold print means little; made in the presence of the man or his emblem, it has the force of prophecy.

To-day the figure and the face are changed. Forty-five years do not pass without leaving their mark, even upon the Heroes of our strenuous epoch. An increasing stoutness—the hereditary enemy of his family—has affected the gait and figure of Mr I. Z. Barnett. His once luxuriant black curls are fallen. His head is surrounded by a short ring of reverend grey hairs, still crisp, however, and still admirably barbered. The clean-shaven face of the Mayence photograph boasts the whiskers of later middle age that meet above the mouth in a manner luxuriant, but quaintly foreign still. The chins are heavier and more rumpled, and the whole face softer and more drooping. Failing eyesight, coupled with a keen regard for dignity, have compelled Mr Barnett to the use of plain gold eye-glasses held by a simple tape. These, with a couple of rings upon the left hand, a heavy signet, a bunch of curious old family seals at his watch chain, some large pin or other, a well-chosen stud, and two cuff links of Russian opals, comprised the whole of his ornament. In dress, however, he is careful and even scrupulous—a habit that accompanies

the excessive personal self-respect which is an only, and a most forgivable, weakness. In colour he affects the maroon; in pattern, a quiet check; and he is careful to hide the ungainly join between the trouser and the boot by a pair of snowy spats. Gloves he rarely wears. His hat is modish.

His philosophy and manner are perhaps of greater import. Himself an agnostic, he has ever extended his religious sympathies beyond the narrow boundary of creed. His spiritual outlook from of old was frank and tedious at times, yet always genial and always helpful in intention. His deeper conviction was best expressed by the phrase he invariably used upon completing the complicated formulæ of some legal document: "My word," he would say upon such occasions, "is as good as my bond." At some considerable distance one would have recognised the man who had succeeded and who had deserved success.

But that success had not come easily. Indeed, until the last magnificent piece of daring upon the M'Korio it could not be said to have come permanently at all.

His birth was a continual drawback: the change of name necessary to his career in England was another: the slight accent which he retained throughout his career

a third. We are a conservative and jealous people, and it is with difficulty that we will admit the genius of an alien, even when that genius flatters or would enrich us.

That Mr Barnett should suffer from such a prejudice was in his case a peculiar hardship. His mother, the daughter of an Englishman settled in Lisbon, was related in some way to Admiral Sir J. Cowen. His father, though technically a German, was one to whom our fullest sympathy should extend. A patriot and idealist of the noblest type, he saw in the occupation of Frankfort in 1866, the advent at once of militarism and of foreign rule. He determined to abandon a town still dear to him, but intolerable since it supported an oppressor. Too just, however, to enforce this decision upon his two sons, he gave them the choice: he that remained should continue the business subject to a half-charge upon all discount and advances, the other might accompany him to freedom and to England. David elected, with reluctance, to accept the Prussian domination; Mr I. Z. Barnett, the younger son, departed with his father to this country, to the no small delight of his mother, who intended, if possible upon their arrival to renew the family ties with Admiral Sir J. Cowen.

This legitimate purpose she did not live to

fulfil. She died soon after her establishment in Sweden, and her husband did not long survive her.

Mr Barnett has often pointed out to me the little room in the Albany where he began his long and difficult struggle with fortune. He spent little, he lived laboriously; within ten years he had accumulated a sufficient capital to devise and launch the Haymarket Bank. The scheme of this speculation, risked by a comparatively poor man, yet in the early thirties, should be enough to stamp the genius of its creator. The Bank depended upon a principle which, had it but proved successful, would have revolutionised the financial world. All depositors were paid interest yearly upon the average of their current accounts at the rate of eight per cent. At first it was difficult to persuade a public wedded, wherever money was concerned, to formal routine; but when, at the end of the first year, the eight per cent. was duly paid (for Mr Barnett would accept no more than his original capital could meet), timidity gave place to enthusiasm, for eighteen months the institution increased as though by magic. If ever the ordinary operations of the bank failed, on occasion, to earn the stipulated interest, fresh depositors could always be depended on: their accounts furnished the funds

necessary for the satisfaction of the yearly dividend. These in turn received at the end of twelve months, the eight per cent. which yet another band of new investors had delightedly furnished.

Upon lines so original and so daring, a new system of banking seemed destined to arise. No limit threatened the expansion of the business, till a venomous article, inspired perhaps wholly by political hatred, suggested that the interest already paid could only come out of the new capital daily furnished to the concern. A panic followed this abominable insinuation (the scoundrel had not the courage to set it down for a fact), and within twenty-four hours, the Haymarket Bank was ruined.

Had Mr Barnett alone suffered by this underhand attack, he would have felt it less; he was still a young man and might retrieve his own fortunes. But the thought of decent middle-class ladies, of poor and struggling clergymen ruined, not through their own fault, but because they had trusted too thoroughly in him, was more than he could bear. I have often heard him speak of those painful days, and he has never failed to point out that the same hands which wantonly destroyed the Haymarket Bank are responsible for the pestilent Little-England-

ism which would (if it could) drag him down from the great place he holds to-day. The same spite that blasted the high promise of his ambitions in pure finance, would—had it the power—wither that climax of applied finance which is but another word for Imperial endeavour: but the M'Korio Delta and all it means is now beyond the power of such enemies.

For years Mr Barnett lay silent and obscure under the stigma of this failure. He visited Vienna, Constantinople, and Calcutta: he was concerned with the Anatolian Railway extension: it failed, and he again withdrew. Passing through Cairo he enjoyed the simple hospitality of the devout Harburys, and learnt from the morning, noontide, and evening prayers of that secluded household, a peace he had not yet known. He attached the younger Harbury to himself as secretary, and set out with a higher heart to retrieve his fortunes. He was instrumental in procuring a very necessary sum of money for the Vidame de Sorral: that nobleman, with the careless generosity of his rank, disbursed a considerable portion of his new found wealth upon a yacht, wherein, overcoming a senseless and unchristian repugnance, he took his benefactor for a short cruise upon the African coast.

It was in these circumstances that Mr I. Z. Barnett, these few short years since, first set eyes upon the land he was to render famous.

They were anchored off the western mouth of the M'Korio. The morning was intensely hot, without a breath of wind. The trees that marked the swampy edge of the Delta shimmered in a kind of mirage, and to the left, on the high land some three miles away, a few white dots marked the settlement and the governor's house.

How often has not Mr Barnett told the story! His idle curiosity, the two days' shooting which his host and he took in the marshes, the slight fever, the British flag at morning, and then suddenly, an inspiration wholly new, the vision of what this place was to be!

The yacht was welcome to sail without him —he was closeted day after day with officials and such travellers as were waiting for the English mail. He travelled: in a fashion he surveyed. He even obtained an interview with the governor, who, sceptical as he is, has recently confessed how impressed he was with the enthusiasm of this strange man, and has himself largely invested in the Company. Mr Barnett was convinced—he knew not how: it was a kind of faith—he was convinced of the presence of gold. He saw the banks dyked,

the marshes drained, a province immensely fertile, teeming with wealth, standing at the door of the vast M'Korio valley, the very key of Africa: and all that for England!

He stayed as long as his health would permit, Harbury by his side, meeting the native chiefs, questioning old hunters, obtaining options, and using such legitimate influence as lay in his power with the local agent of Reuter. Almost bereft of capital, he yet secured some few concessions (for they were thought worthless)—he so disposed them that their sites commanded the best of the territory. Above all, he learnt that the paltry trade of the place, its reputation in the City, and in some sense its economic future, were in the hands of two men, two friends, a shipowner and an importer of hardware. He learnt that of all men they were most contemptuous towards the M'Korio. He learnt that the shipowner thought to know it more thoroughly than any other man, and was not to be persuaded of its great destiny: that the merchant, who had never visited it, had for years driven so weak a trade as to give him the smallest opinion of its chances: that they were both men old, hard in routine, and difficult. He learnt their names. The shipowner was a Mr Abbott; the name of Mr Abbott's friend, the hardware merchant, was Burden.

He learnt that without them nothing could be done: this he learnt thoroughly: this of all the things most impressed him.

He returned to England, and for one year or two he perfected his plans.

. . . . . .

Those who will deny the working of a conscious Providence in human affairs, are led into their errors through an inability to grasp the complexity of the world around them. They would have each good deed immediately rewarded, and rewarded after its own kind; they would have every evil punished in some direct and manifest way, forgetting that such a punishment would not complete the episode, but would itself originate a chain of further effects.

It is not thus that Immanent Justice informs and balances the lives of men. But if we observe a group of human activities for any length of time, we discover a network of reactions in which is soon manifest an astonishing unity of design. This charity, that heroism will bear far off, and in some wholly unexpected portion of the scheme, a fruit which is also its compensation; such and such a piece of cruelty or weakness, seemingly unrequited, may be traced through a succession of consequences, ever creating of itself its own retribution until at last it has paid, just where

the payment was most needed, the full debt incurred to whatever governs the world.

This novel and illuminating thought, for which I am indebted to Dr M'Manus' "Persecution of the Irish Protestants," has thrown a religious light over all the chief experiences of my life. The learned divine exemplifies his philosophy by references to James II. and the history of his own romantic Belfast: I prove its truth by a consideration of the only considerable political movement with which I have been brought into touch, I mean the Development of the M'Korio Delta.

Mr Barnett, meeting Mr Harbury years ago in his father's quiet Oriental vicarage, had recognised his talents, and had attached him to his fortunes. It was an accident, but an accident of kindness.

Mr Burden, my friend, acquired long ago, with little thought of gain, the control of such small trade as could be driven with the naked and debased aborigines of a fetid African river. It barely affected the considerable profits of his business; he gave it little thought. It was an accident, but that accident had in it a vein, however slight, of patriotic motives destined in time to yield, even in this life, a thousandfold.

Mrs Burden had ever desired that Cosmo should be sent to the University. Before his fifth birthday, she had discovered in her child

aptitudes of no common order. His father had nourished a secret design to put him at once from school into the business; during his wife's last illness he had abandoned his own will, and promised her that the boy should enjoy the advantages she implored. That also was an active, if a slight, example of self-denial and of love.

Lastly, and most especially, Mr Harbury, by one fine act of enlightened good nature, had bound in gratitude the reserved and somewhat difficult affections of the lad upon whom so much depended.

Observe how great an issue lay in these little things: these little and obscure good deeds! What man save Mr Barnett had understood, or could understand, the full meaning of the M'Korio? What chances had any vision of his against the opposition of all that limited, monied, hard "good sense" whereby Mr Burden despised the wealth latent in the colony with which he alone traded? And yet Mr Burden's voice in this matter would certainly lead the city! What ambassador could have been found to persuade a merchant of Mr Burden's kind that the future of a great province depended upon such a man as Mr Barnett, whose character could not but have affected him as alien, and perhaps as repulsive?

Cosmo alone could bridge that gulf. His lethargy, if I may use the term, would have proved an insuperable obstacle, and all that he had heard from his young associates of "honour" would have confused his judgment, had not that closer tie been created in a few predestined hours by Mr Harbury's trained, courteous, and ready heart.

Each of us to-day in whatever way we have immixed with that Imperial adventure as shareholders or plain citizens; as preachers, journalists, or perhaps in some sweet womanly way; every soldier who has returned without stain from the Delta; every administrator of every grade, nay, every holder of every salaried office in the M'Korio, owes something to that half hour when so considerable a sum as £1250 was lent without any kind of fee or troublesome inquiry at a nominal rate of fifteen per cent. to rescue a fellow-being from dishonour.

How truly does not the poet put it in a verse, the sense of which I shall always retain, though many of its words escape me:—

> "*Let others . . .*
> *. . . or play the meaner part;*
> *But the little seed of one good deed*
> *Can . . .*"

I remember no more than the last word, which is "*heart.*"

## CHAPTER IV

IN every tragedy connected with old age, the hardening which is the curse of age appears.

The picture which Mr Burden presented at this moment is the more vivid in my memory from the suddenness with which it was extinguished. I desire to describe him as accurately as I may for the sake of that posterity which must learn, not only what his virtues were, but also in what way, and through what weakness, he failed upon the chief occasion of his life. It is a lesson of the highest moment.

Tall, erect, somewhat pompous, but withal very active in his carriage, he carried all the remains of a strong manhood. Of his face I can only say that it was typical of his class: square with a large firm mouth kept closely shut, and carrying, from long habit, an affectation of purpose and determination which was far from the habitual tenor of his mind. His hair was quite white but abundant; he parted it with care upon the left side, and brushed it up clear from his forehead as befitted his sure

sense of what was decent in such things. His eyebrows were contracted into a slight mechanical frown, acquired perhaps in the habit of attention, but certainly expressing no anxiety nor even any particular keenness in bargaining. His hands were remarkably steady, his gestures firm and sure. I have heard it said, with a colonial exaggeration, that to see him open his umbrella was to comprehend England from the Reform Bill to Home Rule. The young gentleman who composed this facile epigram, a student with a nasal accent and weak in every organ, was born and bred in Port Elizabeth, to which distant centre of African loyalty he has returned. Let me forget him and continue the description of my friend.

His eyes, of a pale grey, were alight with so singular an honesty as to border upon ignorance of the world. He had perhaps never in his life deceived a human being. His business, founded upon ample capital, demanding no credit, existing as a wholesale resource for the trade and independent of advertisement, never required it of him to lie, to cheat, to gamble, or to destroy another's wealth. Its expansion had been automatic ; if his success had raised in him any evil, it was certainly nothing worse than a slight tincture of pride.

Of his patriotism I fear to speak lest I should destroy by too violent a praise the impression I desire to produce. It was abundant, it was like a perennial spring; it was the deepest thing in the man. I am certain that had England been in danger he would cheerfully have sacrificed his fortune. He had known nothing but his country; his very religion was in some odd way muddled up with her vices, her spirit, and the peculiar beauties of her landscapes, the less obvious effects of her towns. Indeed, he would have died for her . . . perhaps in a sense he *did* die for her . . . his name, manner, and habit of life seemed to me who knew him to be always England, England.

With all this there was a failing, which neither I nor even those who were in more daily intimacy with him, could hope to eradicate. The national life, to which he was so deeply attached, had stood still with him for many years.

Let me not be misunderstood. He had followed with a certain eagerness the development of England and of the Empire. He was an assiduous reader of the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Gleam*, *The Orb*, *The Globe*, *The Times*, and *The Meteor*; he received *The Spectator*, *The Economist*, *The Doctrinaire* upon every Saturday morning, and occasionally looked at them;

and when he went abroad, according to his custom, during the month of August, he was careful to make such arrangements as caused these standard weekly organs of opinion to reach him not later than the following Tuesday.

The mere facts, therefore, he knew. He was gratified, and occasionally enthusiastic, over the expansion of our dominion. He had a grasp of the various stages by which the jealousy of foreign nations had been stilled, and their competition annulled. He had appreciated in latter years the decline of English commerce, the ruin of our agriculture, and the upbuilding of a Greater Britain beyond the seas.

All the manifest destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race he had seen as clearly as the humblest clerk; he had received it with as religious an emotion as had the poorest and most vulgar of our electorate.

Nevertheless all this had been for him but a pageant. He had never comprehended the great change in our method of thought which this new fact in the life of the world involved. He was like a man who hears of this or that catastrophe—of this or that triumph, suffers in the catastrophe or glories in the triumph, but suffers and glories as in a thing apart: a thing read or seen upon the stage. He never really got it into his mind that *he* was an actor in the

drama ; that *he*, as a citizen, was making the new world.

It is a paradox, but a paradox ever present in our contemporary life ; we owe to it the extreme reluctance with which each new and necessary idea is accepted by a people born, after all, to Empire. It is in our blood.

Did space permit me, I could give many instances of this failing : let me be content with two. Mr Burden had voted honourably and straightforwardly for that small taxation of our food supplies, which was necessary for the consolidation of the Empire. Of the direct effect of that vote he never complained ; but he would not or could not connect with his opinion upon this matter, the necessary depreciation which it involved in his investments, Again, he had read and applauded Mr Chamberlain's great speech just after the Australian Commonwealth cancelled the "loans previous" ; he also appreciated that Australia must have new capital, and that, in the actual state of her credit, this capital could only come from Great Britain ; yet in the meeting in the Cannon Street Hotel six months later, he had described the reconstruction of the Waga-Murri mine as "un-English."

Mr Burden's dissociation from the underlying philosophy of his time went deeper still.

He would have maintained, in a kind of abstract way, that the connection between finance and politics was dangerous—it is difficult to say whether he saw that it was necessary. At any rate he dreaded and avoided that necessity. He would have admitted that a Cabinet drawn from the ranks of rich men was a purer and better government than one formed upon the less stable models of democratic nations, but in some vague way he must have thought of their wealth as exclusively territorial, for he would not only have expressed, but would have felt a very genuine horror at hearing that a Cabinet minister had held, or had been given, such and such shares in a company connected with our Imperial development.

When he was asked, as I once asked him, how a man could be rich and yet not mixed up with the principal source of modern wealth in England, he replied with a simple affirmation; he said that any one in office should sell whatever shares he had possessed in such concerns. He refused to follow the logical consequences of his creed.

It was precisely upon this point that a greater mind, a mind more necessary to England, though not perhaps more English, found the principal difficulty of contact. Mr Barnett knew that the M'Korio Delta was a touchstone for

the future of England. I do not pretend that his only motive lay there. His motives were largely economic. But, at anyrate, the fulfilment of his own legitimate ambition demanded that he should persuade English opinion of what the M'Korio Delta was.

As I have repeatedly pointed out, there was not at that time in the city any name whose influence would have a more immediate effect towards converting the investor in W. African securities than that of Mr Burden; and yet every avenue of Mr Burden's mind was closed to such methods of approach as Mr Barnett comprehended. He could not offer shares, and that sharp imaginative power which would have turned the M'Korio Delta into the great province it must become in the future, he knew that Mr Burden did not and could not possess.

The very circumstances by which Mr Burden came to be the sole arbiter (as it were) of M'Korian trade made Mr Barnett's advance the more difficult.

Charles Abbott, who by a curious anachronism, remains to this day the chief proprietor of the Abbott Line of steamers, had (and has) about him something of the explosive radicalism which was often to be discovered in the older sort of English officials and business men; the men who helped, in their unconscious

way, to build that which we now direct towards such astounding destinies. Of the New Empire he had a shallow, but a curiously robust disgust. He loved things as he had seen them—as they were: for dreams, for anticipations, he had as profound a contempt as for debt. He had never owed any man a farthing; he had never done business with the future. In feature he was red and a little over-eager; in gestures abrupt and strong; but his violence was balanced by a deep and emphatic voice which possessed a strange power of persuasion, especially over men less hearty than himself.

Such a man had not founded his fleet of ships to deal with "niggers." He had developed it upon the South American trade. A Government subsidy had persuaded him to touch once a month at the M'Korio. He had travelled there once in person, and had carried away nothing but an added contempt for the policy that could deal with such things. Through this unsympathetic channel had Mr Burden been introduced to the Delta.

Mr Abbott, though ten years Mr Burden's junior, had been, almost from boyhood, his most intimate friend; it was an intimacy born of perpetual daily association, meals in common, and a long life spent with few other opportunities for expansion than that afforded by each

other's society. When he had last returned to Europe from a voyage to the Delta he had suggested to Mr Burden—with no great enthusiasm—that there was some little dealing to be had with the aborigines of that marsh, in goods of the sort that Mr Burden handled. Iron rings of a sort known to the trade as "Large Nines," were in that district not only a rarity but an object of political necessity. Long the symbol of authority upon the heads of the chiefs, they had been manufactured with infinite pains from old ship nails by the natives, or imported at considerable expense from the neighbouring Sultanate of Botu. Our excellent English article, cheaper, more reliable, and more accurately made, soon settled the competition of these rivals. It was impossible, indeed, to accept as currency the valuable slaves which had formerly found their way to the Sultanate; but considerable quantities of ivory were obtainable for many years in exchange for a gross of these goods; and Mr Burden had the advantage not only of securing such a profit as was due to his initiative and skill, but of knowing that indirectly through his efforts, the slave trade had disappeared in a part of Africa where it had seemed inseparable from the soil.

It was not to be expected that this state of

things should last for ever. Oligarchic as was the nature of M'Korian society, the number of chiefs was limited; and a religious awe forbade the possession by anyone of more than a certain number of these sacred symbols. Moreover, a German firm, secretly subsidised by its government, had so far interfered with the old monopoly as to offer the rings at a price which made it difficult for the original trade to subsist in English hands. But Mr Burden's profits were soon supplemented from other sources. Guns, of a simple sort, and a kind of sword, were introduced, and (a very remarkable example of the ingenuity of a client in Birmingham) fine chain armour replaced the leathern jackets which the warriors of the protectorate had hitherto worn.

But, though Mr Burden had become the sole importer, though his advice and that of Mr Abbott often controlled the decision of the Government in the local affairs of the M'Korio, and though his name was attached to all the few traditions of the settlement, yet the trade was very small, and, such as it was, it was dwindling. In Mr Burden's considerable affairs, the total of this petty offshoot did not amount to one-twentieth at the most; it rarely represented a profit of £400—more commonly less than £300 in a year; and, to

his natural compliance in Charles Abbott's judgment, therefore, was added a business experience which made of the Delta something mean and paltry in his conception.

This contempt of his for the M'Korio was broken down at last by the intervention of Cosmo; but that intervention, necessary as it was in its moment, would not alone have sufficed, though without it nothing would finally have been done.

The ground had first to be prepared for the whole public and for Mr Burden as a part of that public; and the instrument of this preparation was the power which—a full year before he had met Mr Burden's son—Mr Barnett had begun to exercise over the Press.

There is a kind of rash political indignation which we all come across, and to which some of us are attracted. There are men who hate the successful or the rich, but whose hatred is not quite dishonest, though it is wildly unjust. They see conspiracies upon every side, they scowl at every new fortune, but they do so in good faith, for they are haunted by a nightmare of Cosmopolitan Finance—pitiless, destructive of all national ideals, obscene, and eating out the heart of our European tradition. I need hardly say that this kind of hatred was roused against Mr Barnett, and gained an

especial strength from the attitude which the great papers took towards what was known to be his scheme; and yet at that moment Mr Barnett, had the world known it, was comparatively poor. He had not certainly a free capital of ten thousand pounds, beyond what was locked up in his various properties and adventures.

The particular charge made against Mr Barnett was that he had "bought the Press" —or at least the London Press.

Of general and vaguer charges there were many, but they are incapable of proof, and I shall not concern myself with them. With his relations towards the Press I am well acquainted; and though it is not my business to defend Mr Barnett, yet I am so convinced that this kind of indignation proceeds solely from an ignorance of our social machinery, that it is incumbent upon me to show quite clearly how false the accusation was.

The men who made it (a salutary fear of the law of libel forbade them as a rule to put it into print), the men who made it, I say, had no other ground than this: they saw that the M'Korio Delta was in the air, they heard the name upon every side; they knew that Mr Barnett would necessarily grow rich upon its development; they saw the Press almost unani-

mous in its demand for that development, and they jumped to the false conclusion which I have indicated, because their vision had been warped by an uncontrolled and ill-balanced anger against the modern inequalities of fortune.

Mr Barnett had not bought the Press; the Press is not to be bought. That Mr Barnett had an influence with the Press, and a legitimate influence, I will not deny; but when I have described that influence I think my thesis will be proved.

Let us consider first what papers Mr Barnett owned. Here is the list. He was the proprietor of *Little Ones*, *Boy's Chatter*, *The Woman*, *The English Country Side*. For some months, in the interval between the bankruptcy of Sir Charles Binsted and the formation of the Agricultural Union, he had also owned the *Farmer's Friend*. It is incredible that he should have made such purchases with any object of hoodwinking public opinion. He could only have made them as an investment. The very names of the papers are sufficient proof of this.

Beyond these he was proprietor of *The Review*. *The Review* was a losing property; he had been compelled to assume direction of it in payment of a debt, and he was occupied at the date of which I speak in building it up

into something of its former importance. He was also part owner (but only part owner), of the rival *Holborn Review*, and the editor, who had been for some time his private secretary, has assured me that Mr Barnett's name was hardly mentioned in the office. I am confident that he took no interest whatsoever in the *Holborn Review*, save as a financial venture. My readers have but to turn to a file to see that arguments upon both sides were admitted to its pages, and that the M'Korio Delta, even at the height of its fame, rarely afforded matter for more than one article in each issue.

Lest I should be accused of concealing anything that might militate against my contention, I will mention the fact that Mr Barnett did own the majority of the shares of the Twentieth Century Syndicate. Now the Twentieth Century Syndicate, it is true, finances the Railton Group; but Mr Barnett himself had nothing to do with that group. It is interested in *The Mercury*, *The Britisher*, *The Hammer*, and the two evening papers, *England* and *The Empire*. No one who is acquainted with the nature of modern finance can believe for a moment that so indirect a relation would give Mr Barnett the least voice in the management of these sheets.

Whether Mr Barnett held shares in the

London and General Publishing Company at any one time, it is not easy to determine. These shares fluctuated considerably, and, if one may say so without disrespect to so honoured a name as that of the Duke of Essex, the chairman of the Company, they were something of a gambling stock. They were perpetually changing hands, and the motive of their acquisition, whether by Mr Barnett or by anyone else, cannot have been other than that of a speculative game.

Over the great dailies he had absolutely no control whatsoever. He advertised in them, of course; and a good deal of capital was made by his opponents out of the fact that Mr Jefferson, the owner and editor of so important a sheet as *The Gazette*, was connected with Mr Barnett in the old business of the Haymarket Bank; but if that is to be taken as an evidence of corruption, or even of undue influence, who would be safe from such an accusation?[1] A man in his position is naturally acquainted, often intimate, with the leading men of his time. The editor of *The Doctrinaire*—a man wholly above suspicion—

[1] As an example of the lengths to which folly can go, I may quote the accusation made against Mr Barnett that he influenced three of the great dailies upon a critical date by *threatening to cut off their supply of paper!!!*

was proud of his intimate friendship; and he naturally had relations as a host upon more than one occasion with the two proprietors of *The Nation*, and with the editors or owners of most of the other great dailies. But Mr Barnett had no monopoly in such acquaintances or friendships; most of our great financiers could have boasted of the same.

It is time that I should turn from the ungrateful task of defending a man against a calumny that ought never to have been made, to describe the real services which Mr Barnett rendered to his adopted country, and to the Empire; nowhere were these services more apparent than in the interest he took in the careers of the more brilliant young journalists. Let me cite the case of Mr Powler.

Mr Powler had been among the first to see the advantages of reversing our fiscal policy. As long ago as 1898, just after taking his degree, he had written a powerful defence of Protection which had earned him his Fellowship. He was poor, and the whole weight of his genius might have been lost for years to England had not Mr Barnett appointed him to the editorship of *The Review*, just before the outbreak of the war in South Africa. No one is ignorant of the effect of that appointment.

THE EDITOR OF "THE DOCTRINAIRE
(AS HE APPEARED READING HIS PAPER—"CAUSES OF OUR SUCCESS IN SOUTH AFRICA," TO THE ROYAL SOCIETY

Long after the war was over, but a full year before any mention of the M'Korio Delta had been publicly made, the editor of *The Doctrinaire*—a man wholly above suspicion—wrote to Mr Barnett, and asked him if he could recommend some young fellow to sub-edit that great weekly journal during his own enforced absence upon a shooting party in Scotland. I know from Mr Powler himself what passed. Mr Barnett came in person to the office of *The Review*, climbed to the third story (no small sacrifice in a man of his temperament and figure!) and begged Mr Powler to accept the post.

"It is better paid," he said, "and a bigger place altogether than anything that I could offer you." Then he added with a smile: "You know the advice that I always give to you young men."

It was in vain that Mr Powler (so he himself assures me), pleaded to remain in the service of a man whom he could not but regard as the builder of a new world. He knew that Mr Barnett was making a great sacrifice in permitting him to go, and it was only after a generous dispute that the older man had his way.

Mr Powler took with him to *The Doctrinaire* Mr Heinrich Rallé, and between them they gave a life and a meaning to the paper which

recalled the great days of John Hardy and the successful, strenuous battle in favour of the unification of Italy in the sixties. When the editor of *The Doctrinaire* returned from Scotland, he found the beginnings of a fortune; and it seems to me not unnatural that he should, under the circumstances, have permitted something of a new policy to appear in his pages, or that he should have been drawn towards Mr Barnett with a sentiment approaching to affection.

Talent of this kind is rare in modern journalism. The proprietors of *The Nation* privately approached and obtained the services of Mr Henry Rallé. I will not enter into the somewhat heated difference that arose between *The Doctrinaire* and *The Nation* relative to this matter. I will content myself with saying that Mr Raleigh infused a new life into the latter paper, erased from its outer cover the phrase "an Hebdomadal Journal," permitted the insertion of illustrations, and in the general tone he imparted to its articles made it what it had never been before; a vigorous ally of all that makes for the larger life of England. It was on this occasion that Mr Barnett's friendship with Mr Jenkins, a proprietor of *The Nation* arose; and it is a singular example of his tact and care for detail, that, during the four or

five years which have since elapsed, in all the multitude of dinners that either have eaten under Mr Barnett's roof, Mr Jenkins and the editor of *The Doctrinaire* have never met.

I will not weary my readers with the story of the founding of *Criticism*; of the resuscitation of the old *Orb*, or of that vigorous off-shoot of Colonial enterprise, the London edition of the *M'Korio Times*. It is enough to say that, in all this mass of ephemeral literature, the last journal alone was directly founded by Mr Barnett; and, as it dealt principally with the City, it had but little effect upon the general current of opinion.

All this intellectual movement was instinct with the spirit of England.

There are political forces that seem without form, very vague and viewless as great currents of air may be, but they are as irresistible.

Through England and the English some such force has long been stirring. All these young men had felt it; all were bound as by a kind of fate to express it. It coloured their writing upon every topic. It troubled their view of the future; it compelled them to continual appeals. For long that undefined and natural thing, that impulse of patriotism, had wandered in vagaries, thinking that now here, now there, it had found the substance which it

should inspire, the matter which it was destined to make live. So all great movements begin.

At last, and not long after the advent into English journalism of that younger life and keener enthusiasm which I have just described, a true and permanent object absorbed its energies, and, if one may use the phrase, the nation and her servants had found their mission.

The full meaning of the M'Korio Delta had appeared.

## CHAPTER V

IN the first few months after his success in the University examinations, Cosmo lived a life which should have proved a fitting introduction to the position his father had reserved for him.

With the middle of October he entered the business in Thames Street, and displayed an assiduity delightful for Mr Burden to witness.

The merchant was, indeed, astonished at the aptitude, or, perhaps, the inherited commercial talent, which had survived his son's philological training, and was at times prepared to admit that the study of modern languages, even upon the side of pure literature, served (as he had often heard from its defenders) for a gymnastic to the growing mind.

Meanwhile, the young man was far from forgetting the pleasures due to his rank; but he used them in such a way that the development of his character was in no way injured. His health forbade excess. His acquaintances ensured, some that his pleasures should be refined, others that they should be energetic, all that

they should be well selected. In a word he led, during the happy winter months that followed, the normal life of that class which is perhaps the soundest, as it is certainly the most many-sided in Europe—the class which has learnt to govern an immeasurable realm without corruption, and almost without ambition.

It was remarkable that, in spite of his prospects, he maintained a severe grasp over his private expenditure, and this wise economy helped still further to strengthen a character which might, at first, have shown signs of weakness. He managed to do thoroughly well without a private trap, replacing it by such cabs as his business or amusements demanded. As for riding, one horse sufficed him, and when he visited the country to hunt (as he would occasionally do in the middle of a business week), he was not above jobbing a mount from a local stable ; he would not be at the expense of hunters. Did he visit the theatre, the stalls seemed to him his most natural place. He took a box but twice during the whole of that autumn, once when the house was full, and on another occasion when he had calculated that the number of friends whom he could accommodate in this manner would have cost a trifle more had he taken them to separate seats.

At the Empire, the Alhambra, and other

music halls he made it a rule to break a sovereign as he entered, and to make that sum suffice him for the whole evening.

He but rarely visited the Savoy, the Carlton, or Prince's. When he entertained it was at his club, and though he was careful that the wine and cooking should be of the best, yet he abhorred the ostentation of unseasonable flowers, and of vintages whose names might be unfamiliar to his guests. His dress was nearly always new, and always, always quiet. His linen fitted him with exactitude (a result of careful measurement). To his hats he paid that attention which is only to be discovered in men who comprehend the subtle importance of those ornaments.

In everything the management of his affairs displayed a wise reticence and balance; qualities most fortunately bestowed upon him by Providence, when we consider that his father's old-fashioned standard forbade him an allowance of more than £250 a year.

His life, I say, through all that winter, was at once well-ordered and happy, and justly envied by his contemporaries. There was but one flaw in the perfection of his content, and that flaw was to be discovered in the very serious condition of his finances.

The interest upon £1250—an interest to be

paid half-yearly—even if it be at so small a rate as 15 per cent., may appear at the time of payment a sum of astonishing magnitude to the needy. It amounts, as the less classical of my readers will at once perceive, to no less than £93, 15s. at the end of every six months; and when the first of these terms approached him in the course of February, Cosmo had the misfortune to find himself for the moment unable to meet it.

I have already indicated to what an exaggerated extent he permitted such little matters to prey upon his mind. I need hardly say that in his distress he went to call upon Mr Harbury.

That excellent friend spoke to him more seriously than he had done upon the first occasion. He pointed out to him that, while debts of the more ordinary sort were often a matter for jest, the exact payment of interest was a duty upon the fulfilment of which a man's honour was engaged. In a somewhat softer manner, Mr Harbury proceeded to inform Cosmo of the concern which Mr Barnett had begun to take in his career; nor did he conceal from him that, on hearing of his difficulty, the very first thing he had done had been to write to that large-hearted and widely-travelled man whom he (Mr Harbury) regarded almost in the light of a father. Rising at the close of

this conversation, he laid his hand, not without dignity, upon the young man's shoulder, and begged him to dismiss all further thought of the matter from his mind. . . . It would have been evident to a meaner intelligence than that of Mr Burden's son, that he had once more been saved by agencies whose power he had long admired, and whose character he had begun to revere.

From that moment he threw himself with a kind of zeal into the companionship of such friends. The ensuing spring was largely passed in their society. Gratitude alone would have compelled him to frequent their houses: to gratitude, admiration was added, and to admiration a sudden access of a sense of familiarity, when he discovered that no less a person than Charles Benthorpe was very often a fellow guest with himself.

The historic name which this young man bore so easily; the consummate knowledge of the world which he had acquired as the companion of his father's official life, the public reputation of the family, and to some extent the titular honour it boasted, had drawn Cosmo warmly towards the enjoyment of Charles Benthorpe's friendship, during their contemporary residence at the University.

Nay more, Lord Benthorpe himself, as

Cosmo discovered with astonishment and pleasure, was, in a manner, the familiar of these few who had at heart the glory of England in the delta of the great African river. Often as the name M'Korio would enter into the conversation, still more often would the experience, and occasionally the name, of Lord Benthorpe accompany the judgment of Mr Harbury, of Mr Barnett, and of that Major Pondo, whom it will be my business upon a later page to describe. Charles Benthorpe, in spite of the reserve which properly accompanies exalted social rank, was not unwilling to describe his father's attitude upon those Imperial matters whereof that statesman's long political and administrative experience had given him an exhaustive knowledge.

Nor was it only the name and opinions of Lord Benthorpe that mingled with their discussions. Once his lordship came in person to a dinner of Mr Barnett's, and was willing to express by word of mouth his strong faith in the future of the M'Korio Delta. Upon another occasion, Mr Harbury was able to read a letter from him, regretting the peer's inability to address a small private meeting upon the potentialities of the M'Korio, potentialities which, in his absence, were set forth by that Major Pondo, with whom, as I have just re-

marked, and shall probably remark again, a future page must deal.

. . . . .

Were it my task (which I thank Heaven it is not) to compose a work of fiction, I should attempt to exclude all persons and scenes irrelevant to the simple current of my story. The more suitable, but I fear less entertaining, relation upon which I am engaged permits no such artistic selection: I am compelled to describe all those who in any principal way entered the last days of Mr Burden's life, and, delicate as is the business of portraying a living peer and politician, it is my duty to present (with all the reticence and courtesy due to such a figure) the character of Lord Benthorpe.

To this end I must first sketch, in the most summary manner, that distinguished family history upon which depends no small part of the affection and esteem in which all Englishmen delight to hold him.

A subtle admixture of talent and inherited rank is to-day more than ever the strength of our folk. Nor do I fear to offend the modern taste by printing here the typical record of a great line.

Lord Benthorpe's family is first heard of more than a century ago. His grandfather,

John Calvin Benthorpe was, at the close of December 1796,[1] a young solicitor[2] in the town of Dublin. In the very next year we find him put into the Irish Parliament by the Duke of Meath as a recognition of his strong sympathy with the national aspirations of the time, and, Presbyterian as he was, with the legitimate demands for religious emancipation preferred by the bulk of his fellow-citizens: co-religionists of his Grace.

His fine talents and excellent appreciation of men soon won him a political position independent of his early patron; and he had the good fortune to be instrumental, both as a principal and as a shrewd negotiator, in the passing of the Act of Union. He had indeed permitted himself certain rhetorical exercises against that measure in debate; but, in the hard practical matter of voting, his inheritance of Scotch common-sense had outweighed his Irish enthusiasm, and he soon found himself in a position to purchase an estate in Wiltshire, some fifteen miles to the north-east of Old Sarum.

A character too weighty, and perhaps too

[1] Dublin Almanack and Register, vol. xiv. p. 26; also Rolls, Anno xx^ti 4 etc., Dubl. Reg. ff.

[2] The "Pettifogging Attorney" of Grattan's tirade. As a fact he was a fairly prosperous young man with offices at a rental of £40 a year, and already the mortgagee of two public-houses.

sincerely Christian, to feel in middle age the continued attraction of political life, he applied himself rather to the founding of a family worthy of the title which His Majesty King George III. had, at the respectful entreaty of Mr Pitt, conferred upon him.

With this object, he considered for some years the contracting of a suitable marriage, and, after a deliberation whose purpose he was far too chivalrous to conceal, he decided to honour from among many, and to lead to the altar, the charming Laetitia Green, only child of Mr Groen, senior partner in the well-known banking firm of Strong-i'-th'-arm and Hurst.

His wife's and his own remaining fortune he sank in further purchases of land, and in the erection of a very fine mansion in the Debased Palladian manner. This great house (to which its owner first attached the name of Placton) is not only famous with most educated men, but will also be familiar to the general reader from its frequent appearance in the Memoirs of Lady Graftham, and in the Life of Mr Groen, recently published by his nephew, Lord Hurst of Hatton.

George Patrick Frederick-Culson Delamaine, the fruit of this marriage, was born in 1823, at a moment when his father, the first

Lord Benthorpe, was at the zenith of his career as a land-owner. All the gifts of fortune seemed to have been showered upon the boy; his youth was leading to a manhood of the most brilliant promise, when, at the age of twenty-two, romance or folly led him into an alliance with a woman hopelessly beneath him in station.

She was the daughter of some local lawyer or other, and so betrayed, in every accent and gesture, the restrictions of her upbringing, as to be incapable of that moulding influence which her father-in-law's family had hoped to exercise. Her rare visits to Placton grew to be an increasing embarassment for the spacious dignity of the household, and it was perhaps but a merciful intervention of Providence when she was left a widow in June 1852, as the result of her husband walking inadvertently into the well of a lift: a new invention, to which the upper classes were as yet unaccustomed.

He left two children: Mary, born in February 1847, and Albert Delamaine (the present Lord Benthorpe) born in July 1849.

To these children the old man showed a peculiar and a noble devotion. He paid the mother a yearly allowance of no less than £400, on the strict condition that she should live out of England, and enter into no com-

munication with the family. He was even at the charge of employing private agents to see that this condition was observed.

In the choice of their occupations, their servants, their expenses, their very lap-dogs, nay, their governesses and tutors, he directed himself to the single object of making the boy and girl that which their high station would later require them to be; dying in 1858, he left his task as a sacred legacy to his wife, the children's grandmother, who kept in view, with admirable firmness, that ideal of ancient lineage which her husband had so constantly cherished.

Not that any hint of their coming responsibility was permitted to enter the children's fresh young minds. Mary, until her seventeenth birthday, dressed upon less than a hundred a year; rode out attended by a groom in the plainest livery; and was permitted upon no occasion, save that of indisposition, to absent herself from morning prayers. Albert was thrust willy-nilly into the rough and tumble of public school life, and discovered, in the rude manliness of Eton, just what was needed to correct a somewhat oversensitive temperament.

In a word, the first Lord Benthorpe had proved characteristically successful in this his last and (as it proved) posthumous task.

His wife lived to purchase her grandchild his commission in a cavalry regiment, and to see the second Lord Benthorpe attain his majority amid those plaudits which the tenants of Placton loyally reserved for a family to which they owe their material and moral prosperity.

As a soldier, young Lord Benthorpe, though quiet to a fault, proved deservedly popular. His entertainments, which were numerous, were marked by an absolute refinement, and, if he exceeded in expense, it was through no leaning towards ostentation, but rather from the natural desire of a rich and reserved young man to gather, by the sole means in his power, a number of acquaintance.

He was sincerely glad when his regiment was ordered abroad; he saw active service in the Seychelles, he received in person the surrender of seventeen half-breeds of Princess Martha's Own during the great mutiny of 1872, and was mentioned in despatches. His wound in the fleshy part of the leg, received during the dreadful affair at Pútti-Ghâl, is a matter so generally known that I need hardly allude to it, save to remind my readers that the incident is the subject of a fine steel engraving of Hogge's now sold in its original state by Messrs Washington for the price of 21s., though soiled copies are obtainable at a considerable reduction.

Towards the end of the year 1875, when he was but twenty-six years old, he thought it his duty to sever his connection with the army and to enter politics. To this piece of self-sacrifice must be ascribed, I fear, all the future misfortunes of his life.

He married.

Warned, I do not say by his father's example, but doubtless by some instinct, he took to wife the Lady Arabella Hunt, of an age not far distant from his own, of descent a trifle superior, of a fortune which permitted him—I fear imprudently—to rebuild the stables.

Such of my readers as may find their lot cast upon the clayey, the calcareous, or the oolitic soils of our beloved country, will appreciate what I mean, when I allude to the agricultural depression which afflicted the years immediately subsequent to his marriage.

Lord Benthorpe, like so many others of his ancient station, refused to believe that the star of England had set. He was too generous to reduce his splendid hospitality; too patriotic to admit that the country and he could go otherwise than forward; too proud of his superb lineage to regret the investments in arable land, pasture, undergrowth, common, waste and marsh, which his forefathers had made. He did indeed attempt to develop a

small town in his neighbourhood which boasted a medicinal well. He bought certain freeholds within the borough, and the medical profession were enthusiastic in their praise of the waters. The less healthy of the governing classes began to drink them in increasing numbers; but that fatality which seemed to dog his every effort caused an epidemic of acute colic to coincide with the second year of his effort, and he lost upon this chivalrous venture the considerable sum of two hundred thousand pounds.

He borrowed.

At first, for his daily needs, from local banks; later, to repay their claims and to set himself afloat again, from the more imposing corporations of the metropolis; from these he received such aid as he imagined would carry him forward to a better day. But that day tarried.

He maintained his rents with difficulty. He attempted to increase them. He lost the affection of his tenants, a disaster for which the remaining respect of his equals scarcely compensated him. He was finally compelled to abandon, most reluctantly, the society of public entertainers, political, literary and racing men, to which all his early manhood had rendered him familiar. He grew to inviting to Placton none but those to whom no

other hospitality offered. When these failed him, he fell back upon his relatives; when these, upon the local clergy, the smaller squires —the very doctors of his country town. It was of no avail!

The government of Lord Beaconsfield, ever solicitous for the honour of an ancient name, did all that could be done. He was offered posts well suited to his talents; he was eagerly welcomed back to public life. Indeed, it was his public work during the first years of his difficulties — the last of the Conservative cabinet—which has rendered his name so familiar to all of us. How young he was in those brave days! How admirably did he support, and with what courage, the singular place Great Britain vaunted in that better time!

I may be excused some enthusiasm as I recall his speech at Salisbury upon "Peace with Honour," his piloting of the Laundry Bill through the House of Lords, his contribution to the Party funds during the Midlothian campaign, a contribution which I know from personal evidence to have been made possible only by the courtesy of the present Marquis of Bramber, then better known as "Jim."

Certainly he loved his country. It is to the honour of our party system that the Liberal Ministry of the eighties did not misunderstand

a patriotism of this calibre. He was sent to Raub, to the Marranagoes, to Pilgrim's Island: positions which the routine of our Permanent Service will not permit to be highly paid, but which should normally offer ample opportunities for experience. This experience he acquired—but, alas! unfruitfully. Nothing he touched succeeded. On his return to England after an absence of three years, he abandoned his official work that he might be freer to retrieve his fortunes. His connection with Colonial Government should have aided him in the financial development of our dependencies. His advice was, indeed, solicited by the promoters of companies, but it proved almost invariably unfortunate.

True to the straight line of honour in which he had been brought up, he refused to be mentioned publicly in connection with the Raub Central, the Marranagoes Guanos, or the Pilgrim's Island Oil Syndicate. They all went down; but, through that mysterious bond which permits the outer public to scent out, as it were, whatever the City privately honours, his reputation, already great with experts, became general when he permitted his name to stand at the head of the Carria Canal Company. It is no small testimony to the probity of our public life that he benefited in no way from the rapid

success of that enterprise. He was paid an honest salary—a small salary; he demanded no more. It pushed his name to the very front rank of our Builders of Empire. I would it had done more. It failed.

Lady Benthorpe held the helm meanwhile unflinchingly in her large grasp. She was of that kind which old Sutter finely calls "strong women of the Lord"; of that kind which devised the motto: "*Homo sum: nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*" To the last she kept an open political drawing-room, of considerable if decreasing account with the literary and professional classes, using for that purpose in winter the town house of her sister, but during the season the large room of the Progress Galleries, to the left—on the first landing.

Most women, under such a strain, would have abandoned the struggle. Many would have demanded the adventitious aid of stimulating drugs. Her pride disdained it.

She sought the relief of which she stood in need, from wines of the more hygienic sort, especially the lighter sparkling wines so strongly recommended by the Faculty; and even to such medicine she forebore to have recourse until the years of decline, when the frail body could no longer support the indomitable soul within.

Her doctor was fully cognisant of her need. He has assured me that the last sad months owed their tragedy to nothing more than the exhaustion of that admirable brain.

To the very end she was occasionally present at her husband's table, though her conversation was no longer of the sobriety which once lent a special distinction to that board; and when Lord Benthorpe found it necessary in 1886 to step once more upon the platform in defence of the integrity of the Empire—or, as it was then called, the Kingdom—she accompanied him several times. It was with difficulty that she was persuaded to abandon her design to appear at the great meeting in the Albert Hall.

She died in February 1887, at the early age of forty-one years, three months and two days.

Her end, though clouded by the most grievous nervous trouble, was comforted and enlightened by the presence of two beings whom it would be ignoble to dismiss from this record without a passing mention: Mr Warner, the amiable scholar, to whom (as his former tutor) Lord Benthorpe had presented the living of Great Monckton, at the very gates of the park, and his wife, Mrs Warner, whose wonderful little book, "Hours of Healing" wafted the spirit of the dying peeress from earth to heaven.

LORD BENTHORPE PREVENTING THE DISRUPTION OF THE EMPIRE

It has been remarked that the difficulty of pronouncing the aspirates in the title of this spiritual work betrayed a novice in the art of letters. I am not competent to adjudge upon this criticism; but, if it be well found, I may at least point out the marvel of a faith which could redeem any ignorance of mere composition, and infuse so exalted a quality into the prose of an untried pen.

. . . . . .

Lord Benthorpe, thus left a widower, with his little son Charles no more than four years old, applied himself to his public work with a redoubled zeal. His weight in Hampshire during the early nineties, when that great agricultural county was, I regret to say, flirting with Home Rule, cannot be overestimated; yet it formed but a slight part of his beneficent influence. His speeches in the House of Lords recalled the old days when he had been entrusted by the government with the Bill to which allusion has been made; and it was confidently predicted that, on the restoration of his Party to power, he would be given some post in the cabinet.

These hopes were not fulfilled. His disappointment appeared the more bitter, when he considered how widely the journalists upon whom he had wasted his attentions, had recently

spread his public reputation; it appeared appalling when he contemplated the condition of his fortunes. For, it must be admitted (though it cuts one to the heart to expose the humiliation of a man so prominent in our commonweal) that, towards 1895, Lord Benthorpe found himself deprived of all resources whatsoever. The interest upon his various mortgages was met precisely, in good years, by the rent of his land and the products of the home farm. In bad years by these combined with the letting of Placton—a source alas! too often insufficient.

Our society does not permit men to fall unaided. If this is true of the generality of citizens, it is still more true of those whose names seem to stand for the stability of the country itself. Help was immediately found. The management of the house and estate was taken over (together with the mortgages) by the Anglo-Saxon Loan and Investment Company, with which, by a happy coincidence, the name of Mr Barnett was prominently associated. The house and grounds were kept by this financial company in a condition worthy of the name they bore; and Lord Benthorpe was generously permitted to make them his permanent home, not only from a sentiment of what was due to the dignity of his name, but also from a consideration of the added value

which he lent to the premises by his continued residence.

I do not mention this magnanimity on the part of a group of business men in order to impair their reputation for shrewdness and commercial capacity. Everything, down to the wages of the servants, passed through their hands; and they had made it a condition—a condition to which Lord Benthorpe very readily agreed—that even for such small hospitalities as he might desire to extend to neighbours he should, in every case, receive the written permission of the mortgagees.

Lord Benthorpe, at the moment when the great affair of the M'Korio entered the arena of politics, bore an appearance which those unaccustomed to our administrative classes might have mistaken for weakness.

His figure, very tall and spare, was crowned by a head in which the length of the face was perhaps the most prominent characteristic. His thin aquiline nose, his pale grey eyes, set close together and drooping somewhat at the corners, would not of themselves have led to so false a judgment, nor would the shape and position of his ears, to which the narrowness of the head and the sparseness of the hair lent perhaps an undue prominence; it was rather his mouth, which, from an unfortunate habit, he maintained permanently half open, thus dis-

playing somewhat long and projecting teeth, which met at a slight angle, as do those of the smaller rodents. A slight growth upon the upper lip emphasised the unfortunate character of this feature, whose misleading effect was further heightened by a nervous trick of drumming or tapping continually with the fingers, commonly upon his knee, but sometimes upon the table, or whatever else might offer itself to his hand.

As for his attitude, he would most commonly be seen sitting with one leg crossed over the other, and in an inclination of body that gave no hint of the intellectual energy which had inspired so many years.

I say that a foreigner imperfectly acquainted with our polity, and even the less experienced among our own fellow citizens, would not have guessed what power and initiative the whole picture concealed; but those of us who remember the annexation of Raub, the firm hand which suppressed the mutiny in the Seychelles, the disappointment of Germany in the Marranagoes, the settlement of Pilgrim's Island, and especially the dreadful affair of Pútti-Ghâl, are not slow to recognise in Lord Benthorpe, elements of that which has brought our country to its present position among the nations.

. . . . .

Such was the man whom perhaps the best judge of character in our time—I mean Mr Barnett—had designed with slow deliberation to associate in his great enterprise. Lord Benthorpe and Mr Burden were the two pillars upon which Mr Barnett intended the fabric of the M'Korio Delta Development to repose.

Need it be added that he approached Cosmo with a frankness native to all leaders of men, that he pointed out the difficulties which would surround any attempt to persuade the old merchant, his father, of what the M'Korio was and should be, and that he asked — almost with humility—for the help of a young man whom he had himself so conspicuously befriended?

Need it be added that the request was no sooner made than granted?

To the letter, with infinite tact, Cosmo (as I shall show in a moment) carried out those instructions which he knew so well to be to the advantage, not only of Mr Barnett, his benefactor, but of himself, his family, and indeed the whole Empire. He was chosen to bring into just those relations which the situation demanded, his father, and that accomplished politician whose impoverishment, dignity, and judgment it has been my tragic, but not unpleasing task, to recall in the chapter which I now close.

## CHAPTER VI

COSMO was too well acquainted with his father's temper, and, withal, too devoted a son to shock Mr Burden by any sudden introduction of matters upon which the merchant must be presumed to judge far better than he.

It was a beautiful thing—and a striking thing in these days of irreverence and haste—to watch the delicate and modulated steps whereby my old friend was brought, almost without his knowing it, to the brink of the M'Korio. It was a process of that mingled affection and reserve by which we daily see the young leading the aged towards larger things, but one which no mere written description can fully convey.

The young man would leave a book of Major Pondo's in the hall by accident; Mr Burden would pick it up under the impression that it was a work of fiction: he would grow sufficiently interested in it to take it into town with him; he would remark the half-tone blocks representing the dryer parts of the

delta: he would turn it sideways to glance at the map of the river mouths; he would glance with pleasure at the footnotes which referred him to Scripture — and when he brought home the book Cosmo would forget its origin, but would remember at last that it had been lent him by the son of Sir Samuel Gare.

Had Cosmo any notes to write to Mr Barnett or to Mr Harbury, he was careful to write them in his father's house, to address them to their offices, and to fling them at random upon the hall table whence they should be picked up and posted; for his father hated disorder, and, scolding, would catch them up himself.

He would even at times reconcile it with his conscience to address envelopes to fictitious persons in the M'Korio settlement, or in the delta where none resided.

He did not omit to leave the newspaper on the breakfast table, so folded carelessly as to present, among other things, whatever journalists might have printed that morning upon M'Korian matters: to the astonishment and delight of his father he took to rising at an hour earlier than the rest of the household, that he might have the advantage of reading the news in full before his father should come

downstairs; but on those third or fourth days, when the M'Korio was given a leading article, he would keep the newspaper throughout the meal, until his father was in a hunger for it and would read it the more keenly.

With something approaching art he spoke, and always spoke in praise, of whatever small parcels had been invoiced from the office for this apparently unimportant branch of the firm's business, but affected (wisely I think) to ignore their destination; now presuming that they were for China, now actually causing their misdirection, and again mispronouncing the name when his father reminded him.

He showed a curious anxiety with regard to a trade gun which Mr Burden had received as a sample from Birmingham. He was especially interested in the coats of mail; it was he who suggested to the Society for the Promotion of Biblical Knowledge that they would do well to write to a firm which penetrated the interior of the country, and yet he who asked his father from whom such letters came and what reply should be given them.

In the commonest topics of conversation, this atmosphere prevailed.

If his father spoke of cricket, Cosmo would remember the curious aversion shown to that game by the son of Lord Benthorpe, an aver-

sion that had amused rather than annoyed so excellent a bowler as Hagbourne, Mr Barnett's friend. . . . The match had been played on Mr Harbury's ground.

If his father mentioned a club, it either was or was not a club to which Charles Benthorpe or Major Pondo belonged.

Wine recalled the fact that it could not be drunk in the tropics; whisky reminded him that it had been declared by such authorities as Sir George Mackintosh and Lord Bannochry to be the healthiest beverage for pioneers in the valleys of African rivers.

Nevertheless when, after a few weeks of this treatment, his father himself spoke directly of the M'Korio, most obviously betraying a mixture of authority and interest, Cosmo with exquisite consideration turned the conversation into almost any other channel, and commonly fell to talking of his undergraduate friends, of Imperial geography, or of Mr Barnett's great intimacy with, and salutary influence upon, the resident members of the University.

One way with another the M'Korio became an atmosphere in that household, long before the winter ended. It had all the qualities of an atmosphere; ever present, circumambient, necessary to life, yet but half perceived, an

invisible influence. When I consider that this great result had been achieved by a youth hitherto untrained in the beneficent activities of commerce, I think no greater example could be given of the power which has made modern England.

That Cosmo was naturally absorbed in Mr Barnett's venture, and that his conversation was bound to reflect it, I will not deny, but I am confident that a conscious purpose animated him, and a method learnt from his recent association with greater men. For "there are friendships," as that erratic but original Cambridge genius Colthorpe has remarked, "there are friendships which are a liberal education. . . ."

Thus, through the agency of a son, in a manner which recalled the training of some proud graminivorous creature for the use of man by a method gentle yet firm, most filial, most efficient, Mr Burden, in spite of the routine of a lifetime, was gradually brought to the vision of a great Imperial opportunity.

It was towards the end of March, after a day spent in an attitude of curious reserve, that he at last spoke plainly to his son of a subject which had long occupied his mind.

In deference to his father's wishes, Cosmo had that day dined at home.

It was late in the evening at Avonmore: the fire lit in fitful glimpses the eight red leather chairs ranged along the wall of the smoking-room, the many photographs of Mr Watt's work and of that of the late Sir Edward Burne-Jones, as also the noble engraving of "The Gambler's Wife," which hung amidst them in all its wealth of line and value.

The hour and the scene were propitious, when Mr Burden committed himself to a confidence unique in his lifetime; for, with the single exceptions of Mr Abbott, whose advice he most constantly demanded, of his head clerk (a man of immense experience), and of his sister, no human being, he could boast, had inspired his ventures or had ever been privy to his intentions.

His heir, however, his only son, who would in time direct the whole fortunes of the house, had a clear right of admission into so considerable a change as that which he contemplated: for that son's evident good use of his academic opportunities, and his excellent choice of acquaintance, seemed to make him worthy of it in spite of his innocence of affairs.

Rousing Cosmo, therefore, from the reading of an article upon the *Decline of Portugal*, Mr Burden very weightily declared a considerable anxiety to be present in his mind.

Twice that day there had been some trouble in the office about the trade with the North ; Cosmo was therefore to be excused if he immediately sympathised with his father upon the rise of freights to Reikjavick, and the inexplicable dropping off of the demand for English stoves in Iceland. Mr Burden assured his son with remarkable solemnity that he was mistaken. He paused a moment and said :

" You probably know, Cosmo, in fact you certainly know by this time, that a portion of our firm's business is done with the M'Korio Delta."

Cosmo was far too loyal to deny his acquaintance with that fact, but his features showed how little it had occupied his thoughts. Mr Burden paused again and frowned. He went on :

" Now, this trade has never been of value to us . . . but I have often thought . . . I may have been wrong . . . I have often thought that it might have been developed if I had looked more closely into the matter."

After a full and yet more fruitful pause, the third, but not the last, in the course of this critical discourse, Mr Burden proceeded with astonishing breadth and grasp to develop that theory of commerce which distinguishes us from our less fortunate rivals. Compelled as

I am to condense his diction, I am yet careful to repeat his actual phraseology, in a matter of which he was a master and of which I cannot even call myself a novice.

He set forth first that times were not what they had been; that competition was keen; that new markets had to be looked for; our prosperity was indeed increasing, but the ratio of that increase was declining. For a full ten minutes he distinguished in the most lucid manner between actual and comparative growth; finally, he propounded with some hesitation, yet warmly and grandly, as a scheme or suggestion of his own, that the new markets might be expected to arise in new countries.

Cosmo, to whose vigorous if quiet mind original theories immediately appealed, was moved to a whole world of thought and allusion by his father's sudden insight. He recalled examples of success achieved upon such lines; Australia suggested many Johannesburg many more, nor did he neglect the Western States of America; but he asked what the M'Korio Delta, known so long, tropical, forgotten, could have in common with these?

It was then that Mr Burden fully delivered himself of the idea which had so long been maturing in his brain; he hoped—he could not

tell why—it was but a hope—yet he hoped that the M'Korio Delta might prove one of those undeveloped tracts of an Empire whose future contained almost infinite possibilities.

"This idea of mine," he added, "has been singularly confirmed by one or two things I have read, and certain chance allusions of travellers in the last few years. I doubt whether our explorers or our journalists have had quite the same opportunities of judging the Delta as myself; and I am not accustomed to form my judgment upon that of other men. Nevertheless, I am struck by the singular way in which all modern research upon the matter seems to converge towards my own original conclusions."

When Mr Burden had said these things, Cosmo, with a wisdom beyond his years, pointed out the extreme risks attending all colonial experiments. The risk was not perhaps a risk to the nation as a whole; but it was invariably present for the individual speculator. His father nodded rhythmically and wisely as his son betrayed in every phrase an increasing caution, but he cut him short with a firm gesture.

"No one knows that better than I, Cosmo," he said. "I would not enter into any scheme that did not promise to obtain a very large support from the public, and, I hope, some kind of official recognition. . . . When you are as

old as I am," he went on, as Cosmo would have interrupted him, "you will know that official recognition, even if it is unofficial," here he hesitated for a moment, "even if it is *informal*, is what makes the public come in."

And with this expression of opinion, Mr Burden permitted to linger upon his lips, a faint smile which showed the importance he justly attached to his knowledge of the world.

He might have gone further, but Cosmo, for all his freshness, knew what was passing in his father's mind. There ran in his voice a grace and humility strangely contrasting with his heavy features and attitude.

"My dear father," he said. "If I could do anything . . . but no one takes me seriously in business yet." His eyes smiled as he said it.

His father answered proudly. "They will, Cosmo, they will," and never was his confidence in the future better placed.

"I only know men just as friends . . . I know what you mean . . . the University does that . . . I was thinking who of all that lot understands the place best. . . . You know, for *my* part," changing his tone to a digression, "I believe in it, but I mean politically; commercially it wants all sorts of special knowledge . . ." then his face filled with thought and he stared at the fire.

Mr Burden smiled tolerantly: he had a reminiscent vision of his boy's rapid successes: of the academic triumph in Modern Languages, and, still better, the firm friendships acquired with men proud to be his equals . . . perhaps through these an introduction to families that would accept or even search an alliance: such early affections as . . . But his reverie was cut short by an inspiration of Cosmo's.

"Why not ask Lord Benthorpe?" he said.

"Lord Benthorpe!" cried Mr Burden. He was surprised and a little shocked, and he let it be perceived.

Lord Benthorpe was a public man; it was only by his own desire that he had not taken a high place in his party. As it was, in administration he had come near to being, he might yet be, a great Imperial Figure. Mr Burden could well remember how this somewhat younger man had been acclaimed as a worthy successor to his celebrated grandfather. His reputation, especially in youth, had been surrounded by that purely political atmosphere which the patriotism of purely commercial men turns into a halo. All these things Mr Burden insisted upon openly in reply to his son. Perhaps, as old men will, he somewhat exaggerated the importance of a name which recent years had somewhat lessened; but his life had run

upon lines sufficiently remote from politics to warrant his humility, and, if he doubted the possibility of obtaining Lord Benthorpe's advice upon so small a matter as the M'Korio, it was because he estimated at its full value the weight of that advice, should he but have the good fortune to receive it.

Cosmo was earnest. He protested that he could not see his father's objection. He did not know Lord Benthorpe well, but he knew Lord Benthorpe's son extremely well. He was absolutely certain, he said, that Mr Burden misunderstood the simplicity of such men. Then, apart from that, Lapthorne and Curley had asked advice on neutral matters, and had received it—he assured his father that Lord Benthorpe's world had for the City as great a regard as ever the City for them ; they knew upon what the Empire reposed, and they saw —and for the matter of that he, Cosmo, saw— that, but for some communication between the Benthorpes and the Burdens, the Empire could hardly survive.

He would have said more in the same strain, had not Mr Burden, whose pride was dimly suffering from so much protest, risen, rather abruptly, and announced a decision to take his own time in the matter. His son had the tact to say good-night.

And Mr Burden also went to his room—but for two hours he wrote and rewrote a letter in the third person, in which Mr Burden presented his compliments to Lord Benthorpe, and expressed in *oratio obliqua* his apologies, his request for advice, and his trust that it might be obtained. This letter that same night, very late, Mr Burden carefully posted with his own hand in the pillar-box nearest to Avonmore—the pillar-box which stands at the corner where Mafeking Avenue falls into Alexandrovna Road.

. . . . . .

That night, before he slept, an indecision oppressed Mr Burden. He felt he had taken a plunge. He was not sure whether it was for well or for ill; but he knew for certain that he was on the way to unfamiliar places, nor is such expectation congenial to men grown old.

All the next day this double mood haunted him. It was mixed with vague suspicions of interference and quarrel; it left him ill at ease, until, upon the morning of the morrow, there reached him a charming note, straightforward, easy and most terse; the notepaper was plain and thick, the hand fluent, the phraseology easy. It was a letter worthy of the care with which Mr Burden preserved it. It spoke of his son's great promise, praised his University

record and the multitude of his friends; it begged that Cosmo's acquaintance with Charles might take the place of an introduction; it assured Mr Burden, with open emphasis, that no one in England had a greater right to consult every judgment upon a matter where his firm's enterprise in trade had, almost alone, laid the foundation of our power. Nothing of moment remained, save the signature, the simple word "Benthorpe," written undoubtedly with a thick quill;—and the old-world courtesy of a postscript, begging that Mr Burden would let the writer know upon what day and by what train he would reach Great Monckton, "the next," ran the last words of the letter, "the next after the quiet little wayside station of Keynes."

. . . . . .

It is always a matter of balance for the judicious mind, when it meditates an approach upon Placton, whether it should travel by the Great Western to Halsden Junction or the South-Western line to Great Monckton. Each is at an equal distance of three miles from the mansion, but a host of considerations, which might prove tedious to the anxious reader of his fortunes, ultimately decided Mr Burden to attempt the latter. It was from Waterloo, not from Paddington, that he engaged upon that

fateful journey which came so near to transforming the fortunes of our race.

The mixture in him of audacity and routine —a mixture common to the mercantile classes of our countrymen—awakened the struggle which lasted during the whole journey to the quiet little wayside station of Keynes.

He was alone. In the days when the distinction was of importance he had acquired a habit of travelling first class; this habit he had preserved. He owed to it the solitude which permitted such a conflict to arise in his mind.

His fortune had been inherited from so solid an ancestry, had been preserved by so persistent an effort of probity and diligence, that any speculation whatsoever had for him, at his age, a savour of sacrilege.

On the other hand, the expansion of the British Raj, his faith in its future, the example of so many nations created out of nothing by the confidence of his contemporaries, above all, the remarkable wealth acquired by those who had risked all upon the destiny of the Empire, led him on to boldness.

Hard-headed business men are not easily to be persuaded when opposing arguments present themselves to the mind. Mr Burden was not resolved when he reached at last the quiet little wayside station of Keynes.

For a few moments he was at once bewildered and annoyed at hearing that he was required to change, but, when he had paid the customary fees and found himself once more alone in a well-lit carriage, this annoyance disappeared before a renewal of the problem which vexed him. His mind, however, was vigorous, he bent upon that problem the fullest of his energies, and, as the train pulled out of the quiet little wayside station of Keynes, he had very nearly arrived at the firm conclusion, that so much was to be said upon either side, as to make the judgment of some further adviser necessary before a determination could be taken.

His mind was hardly fixed upon this excellent solution when the train stopped; he heard called the name of Great Monckton, and the presence of a servant who led him to a carriage, the honest English courtesy of the Porter, Stationmaster, Guard, Newsagent, Ticket Collector, and General Boy, the sharp country air and the name of Placton several times repeated, gave him that sentiment of repose which accompanies the neighbourhood of the great. And the carriage rolled, and scented woods passed incessant through the evening, and more and more did Mr Burden feel himself to be approaching security and the bâsis upon which our England is founded.

There was a lodge, a fine gate cast in imitation of wrought-iron and gilded in the Aylesbury manner, an aged woman who courtesied with astonishing charm, a drive of close upon a mile, ancient and well-groomed trees, a square church tower showing dimly against the sky, and, in a dale which the drive skirted, a lake with boat house, island and terrace, as in the well-known view.

Mr Burden, noting all these things with pure intent, felt something old in his blood: he revered in his mind Lord Benthorpe's mighty image, and laid his doubts at the feet of so much achievement and experience. He thirsted (if I may use the phrase) for the presence of the British statesman.

It was not long delayed. They led him into that majestic house, dark, panelled, venerable: walls so old that no man now living there had seen them rise, oak felled before Her late Majesty assumed the sceptre, furniture compared with whose taste that of Prince Albert was modern, deep carpets from Brussels and Aubusson, pictures by the Oxford Turner, by Etty, by Frith, by men whose very names are forgotten—they led him, I say, past these monumental splendours, till he reached a vast apartment wherein by the light of two candles of pure yellow wax Lord Benthorpe sat alone—

an illuminate spiritual figure startling against a background of vague darkness and suggested tapestries.

I have said enough of this statesman's build, manner and history to convince my readers that the moment was supreme in Mr Burden's life. As he entered and was announced, he felt so keenly the emotions of awe and gratitude that he hesitated for a moment to advance.

What Lord Benthorpe had done and was, all England knows: the conqueror of Raub and the hero of Pútti-Ghâl.

Mr Burden was a merchant worth at most but £257,000, and that locked up entirely in his business; but no difference of fortune affected the demeanour of the more illustrious man.

With the commercial classes of three European and fourteen Colonial capitals Lord Benthorpe had been famous for that rare power of putting his visitors at their ease: he did not fail with Mr Burden. For though that unaffected man broke into a cold sweat under his first addresses, a short three-quarters of an hour in the company of the soldier-politician restored his power of speech and made him feel the presence of a friend.

. . . . . .

When it was evident that Mr Burden had

entered this happier phase, Lord Benthorpe, settling into an air of business, asked, as he had asked so many in his active and useful life, what he could *do* for his guest.

It was a formula he had been taught from the nursery: he had used it upon inferiors of every grade, and always with success—unless I except an unfortunate interview with a cabman which in no way regards these pages: for whereas the cabman on that long past day had poured out with many oaths a list of incongruous things which Lord Benthorpe might do for him, and closed it with a refusal of all save the payment of the mere fare he had called to collect, every other visitor, from the Secretary of the Society for the Prevention of Diseases to the Sendar of Raub had been charmed to admiration by the manner in which the phrase was delivered.

Mr Burden felt the spell, and it was with evident gratitude in his voice that he declared himself arrived to discuss the matter mentioned in his letter.

Lord Benthorpe smiled without effort, and tapping the table before him with his fingers as was his wont, murmured twice:

"By all means . . . By all means."

Then there was silence in that great dark room for the space of nearly four minutes.

A clock ticked solemnly in a corner, out of sight, and every now and then Lord Benthorpe tapped again with his fingers upon the table; but for these there was no sound to mask Mr Burden's breathing. At last Lord Benthorpe pushed back his chair, crossed his legs, supported his left elbow on his knee, his head upon his left hand, and said again in that low meditative tone, which was so full of responsibility and reminiscence:

"By all means. . . ."

Without, in some remote ante-chamber of the great building, a servant played upon a gong of restrained and ample tones; the house was filled with the summons, but softened as it was, Mr Burden found in it a suggestion rather than a command that he should dress for dinner. With this object he rose.

His host preceded him, lit a candle with his own hands, and showed the way up the staircase. At its head opened a very wide corridor, lit from above by skylights, and hung with pictures which were part of the glory of the house.

They passed one canvas after another, Lord Benthorpe still holding and shading the candle, Mr Burden listening with intelligent respect to all he heard. This was Naples, that Lucerne; a third Nice, a fourth Mentone — all the

strange, beautiful places Lord Benthorpe had admired in the course of his extensive travels : pictures ordered by him from local masters whose name still stood clearly inscribed in the bottom left-hand corner of their creations.

There were portraits too. A very fine, but somewhat sinister figure, turbaned and sombre, was his great-aunt Kathleen, his grandfather's only sister. His grandmother, represented as the Tragic Muse, filled amply the next frame ; his grandfather the next.

Standing in his robes against a fringed and tasselled velvet curtain of a rich purple hue with a broken pillar at his side, while a sunbeam bursting through a distant cloud, threw into fine relief the orator's gesture, the Great Irishman was represented speaking in the House of Lords in favour of the reform of the Poor Law. His left hand touched with the index finger a map of Great Britain ; his right was slightly raised to heaven in dignified appeal. A wolf-hound nestling at his feet indicated the domestic nature of his character, for the taste of that time permitted the allegory in spite of the grave improbability of such a creature's presence in such a place and upon such an occasion.

Towards the end of the corridor, before a painting more modern in treatment and hang-

ing quite alone, they halted a moment in silence. It represented a woman yet young: hair of a colour similar to her own was caught up behind her head in those ordered masses once known as the Chignon; her skirt, which was most ample, was of a brilliant pink; she was seated writing at a superb escritoire, or writing-table, holding a graceful quill in a hand of which the little finger emerged coquettishly above its fellows. The frame was surmounted by the ornament of a dainty coronet; upon the features an amiable smile was recorded.

"My wife," said Lord Benthorpe simply. Then, after a long pause, "by Marsten . . ."; finally in a deeper and more subdued voice . . . "from a photograph."

The two men parted, and Mr Burden dressed in profound thought, wondering to have seen so much greatness united with such native ease.

Lord Benthorpe had been granted by his financial assistants the widest latitude for this evening's entertainment. Indeed, a cheque, upon which no questions were asked, was sent him the moment his request reached them. He preferred, however, with inbred tact, to call but one other guest to his table, lest the merchant should be confused by too considerable a

gathering. This other guest, chosen with admirable judgment, was Mrs Warner, who lived as an honoured neighbour in the seclusion of her widowed cottage near by. Lord Benthorpe introduced the clergyman's widow, as is the custom among men of breeding, in a voice so low and blurred as to leave Mr Burden under the erroneous impression that the lady, if not a peeress, enjoyed at least a courtesy title; nor can I regret the trivial error, when I reflect how admirably it served at once to prove the equality that reigns over all our social relations, and to afford, though by an illusion, the most vivid interest and pleasure to my dear old friend.

As for the meal that followed, not the mere meats, though these also had been ordered by the master of the house and cooked to singular perfection—not these, but the subdued and cultured converse which illumined it, are most worthy of memory.

To a soup, clear, but if anything insufficiently salted, and during the absorption of which very little was said, succeeded a boiled turbot, whose sauce, a mixture of butter and of flour, was handed noiselessly from out the surrounding darkness by a manservant other than he who poured at intervals of due length, and at the personal choice of each guest, hock or claret.

Both these administrants, and yet a third, who would occasionally appear and pass out again through the immense portals of the room, secretly astounded Mr Burden by the perfection of their training, and the singular dignity of their demeanour; nor could he doubt that their features, though difficult to discern beyond the circle of light which fell upon the table, corresponded with their other characteristics.

It was during the consumption of the fish (turbot as I have said—and boiled), that Lord Benthorpe, with practised good-will, opened the verbal tournament by an allusion to Mrs Warner's little work, "Hours of Healing," with which he was sure Mr Burden had long been acquainted. Mr Burden, in the act of disguising his ignorance under a strong assertion of his familiarity with the gem, could not but admire within himself the literary skill of one whose rank he imagined so exalted. It confirmed him in his respect for a class which gallantly neglects its gilded leisure, not only for the service of the State, but also for that of humanity at large.

To this impression Lord Benthorpe added by asking, with apparent interest, whether or not the work of the parish had recently afforded matter for serious comment. Mrs

Warner replied that nothing of moment could she recall since the affair in which her host, in his capacity of Justice, had so amply seconded her efforts to correct the disorders of a wandering circus recently visiting the village.

It cannot be denied that Lord Benthorpe was pleased with the recollection; a merited content overspread his features as Mrs Warner went on to describe the vigour with which the lord of the manor had lent his influence to discountenance, the magistrate his power to punish, a case of gross cruelty to animals which had taken place in this show.

It seems that a tiger having, in some irrational fit, attached itself to the trunk of the sole elephant the manager could boast, was lashed off again by the application of a horsewhip, the weals caused by which were the more difficult to prove in court, both from the inconvenience of bringing the victim before the bench, and from the peculiar parallel stripes already provided by nature upon the poor creature's hide.

When this relation was accomplished, Mrs Warner had the tact to add that his lordship's experience in the East (an experience which she coupled with the name of Pútti-Ghâl) had luckily given him an ample knowledge of tigers. He it was, she informed Mr Burden,

who had pointed out that in all such cases the truer Christianity of our Indian fellow-subjects, had long learnt to drag off the infuriated feline by a steady pull upon its tail.

Lord Benthorpe asserted in reply that so long as he had the confidence of His Majesty, and was honoured by him with a Commission of the Peace, there was nothing he would more rigorously pursue than the inhumanity of the lower classes towards dumb animals; and, having so expressed himself, he once more relaxed the momentary firmness of his lips, and left to them their more usual expression of open amiability.

At this moment appeared, with some ceremony, a leg of mutton loading a dish of pure silver, whereon the presence of little runnels leading to one united depression for the retention of the gravy, marked the practical combined with the luxurious.

The conversation having turned upon tigers, perhaps the most interesting of the animal creation, and Lord Benthorpe's experience in the East having been, as was public knowledge, manifold, it is little wonder if he occupied the remainder of the meal in a somewhat lengthy description of his adventures in the pursuit of this game; for, though no class of the community knows better when to be

silent, neither is any better fitted for sustaining a monologue than that which the host of the evening had adorned.

Making light, with becoming modesty, of his own courage in the innumerable dangers which he had encountered, he did not even allude to the little affair at Pútti-Ghâl, save to illustrate a point upon the habits of the tigers which infest that neighbourhood. Nor was anything in his many miraculous escapes incredible to an audience as well informed as were the merchant and the clergyman's widow upon the ferocity of wild beasts, and the indomitable spirit of man.

Lest I should seem to lay too much insistence upon what was, after all, but an episode in Mr Burden's career, I will dwell no longer upon the close of the meal.

Of the pudding I have no record: there is little occasion to mention the cheese.

I must not, however, omit to praise the gesture with which Lord Benthorpe opened the door, nor that with which Mrs Warner rewarded him as she swept through it to the drawing-room beyond. As she left the room Mr Burden, gazing at what he afterwards called her retreating figure, could not help marvelling at the simple grace, the total absence of affectation, and, at the same time,

MRS. WARNER—RETREATING FIGURE

the wonderful dignity of her carriage. The impression was heightened, not only by the error into which he had originally fallen as to her social rank, but by the striking character of her dress, which was of a shining electric green, comparable to that which illumines the wing cases of certain tropical beetles.

In her absence the conversation flagged; they slowly sipped their wine, and Mr Burden, who had smoked after dinner every day for nearly fifty years, waited most anxiously for the appearance of tobacco. If none was offered him, it was because Lord Benthorpe, naturally clinging to what remained of his ancient authority, forbade in the house which yet sheltered him the use of a narcotic he abhorred.

Mr Burden, remembering that such eccentricities were but the tradition of an older society which he profoundly respected, suffered in silence; but his suffering impressed with a monotonous dullness the few moments during which Lord Benthorpe retained him to drink wine. Indeed, until they rejoined Mrs Warner, nothing passed between the two men save a remark from Lord Benthorpe, that the stripes upon the tiger, to which allusion had been made during dinner, were a curious instance of mimetic selection, permitting the man-eater

to be almost indistinguishable from the tall grasses wherein he lurked. To this Mr Burden replied that Providence had endowed all animals, even the weakest, with marvellous opportunities for self-protection.

The conversation after they entered the drawing-room, though full of interest and charm, must no longer detain the reader, who will have formed a sufficient judgment of its character from the careful analysis which he has just perused.

It was at the early hour of ten that Mrs Warner left them, and Mr Burden, recognising that an enforced departure before morning prayers would leave but little time for discussion on the following day, boldly approached the subject which had brought him to Placton.

He put forward very earnestly his doubts and his hopes upon the future of his African trade; he told Lord Benthorpe frankly, how vastly superior were the opportunities of the politician to those of the merchant for determining the probable future of such a district as the M'Korio, and he asked, in the plainest terms, for advice.

Lord Benthorpe's reply so greatly surprised him, that he did not at first recognise its immense importance. It was roughly to the effect, that Lord Benthorpe himself had long

LORD BENTHORPE RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS-MEN TO THE EMPIRE

been seeking a similar source of information, and had determined, strangely enough, to approach Mr Burden.

"I am very glad you wrote to me," he said, "because I believe myself to be by nature diffident where initiative is required . . . but as you have written to me, believe me, Mr Burden, it is not I who have to determine you, but you that *have* determined me. . . . I have seen the Empire, Mr Burden, in its broader and its remoter aspect. Well," here some memory of public speaking seemed to seize Lord Benthorpe, "well, after having so seen it, near and far, in the snows of Canada, or the burning deserts of Rajpootan, I can say that it has never reposed, that I have never seen it reposing, upon any other basis (upon any other permanent basis) than the energy, the shrewdness, the courage, and the probity, of our English business men."

As he spoke thus, Mr Burden felt new influences flooding into his soul, and Lord Benthorpe continued :—

"If you will allow me to say so, your view of the M'Korio as a practical investment would only complete and inform my knowledge of its political future; but, between my knowledge and your estimate, the latter is immensely the more important of the two."

Then it was that Mr Burden became greater

than himself. The confidence reposed in him, the critical power which, however hidden from others, he well knew himself to possess; the just deference paid to his judgment and interest; above all, the high recognition of a successful career, affected him to the degree of inspiration. He spoke of the M'Korio with increasing confidence; he was carried on from sentence to sentence, assuming a certitude which, if he did not possess it as a positive knowledge, he could claim by the more divine right of prophecy. Nay, he exceeded his own moments of strongest conviction;—so true is it that the human mind, when it feels itself the instrument of destiny, outleaps the narrow boundaries of mere sensual experience.

Exquisite as was his breeding, Lord Benthorpe betrayed a very genuine enthusiasm; and when Mr Burden had reached the climax of his harangue, the statesman was tapping his fingers with such rapidity as to suggest the antique rattle or the buzzer of modern times. He looked up as Mr Burden ended and said:

"Do you know, do you know, Mr Barnett?"

Mr Burden replied that his son was very intimate with Mr Barnett and his friends, but that he himself had never met him.

Then Lord Benthorpe described in some detail the vision which Mr Barnett had con-

ceived. He told him how frequently Mr Barnett had come to him at Placton and in town, to discuss the possibilities of the M'Korio; of how, more than once, a syndicate had nearly been formed, but how they each felt, he and Mr Barnett and a group of other men, the necessity of more knowledge. That solid knowledge they had now acquired. Greatly as he admired Mr Barnett's organising power, and much as he respected, nay loved, his ardent patriotism, he had mistrusted the visionary until he had heard the practical man.

And now (Lord Benthorpe concluded) there was nothing between them all and the creation of a mighty province, save such few meetings, one with the other, as the formalities towards the formation of a syndicate required. He would beg Mr Barnett or Mr Harbury to write to Mr Burden, and they would meet, and the thing should be done.

As is necessary in business, the two men went over the ground again seven or eight times, careful to add nothing to their former conclusions, and before half-past one the future was fairly clear.

Thus, thus was Mr Burden decided. I that write this love my country, but I loved him too; and I could weep to think that, in her profit from his own action, he profited nothing; but only died.

## CHAPTER VII

LORD BENTHORPE'S descent and training, of which my readers have received an account, forbade him to exhibit haste in his further dealings with Mr Burden. His long administrative experience in the Orient, with which these papers have already rendered the Anglo-Saxon race familiar, equally forbade him to leave his associates and friends long ignorant of Mr Burden's views. He wrote to Mr Barnett immediately after Mr Burden's departure from Placton, and was charmed to discover, in the reply, that the Empire Builder was not so wrapt in his dreams as to forget that a certain delay in money matters is the mark of good birth. Indeed Mr Barnett advised that several weeks should pass before the matter was mentioned again.

Mr Burden, meanwhile, who was chiefly acquainted with the narrow world of business, read such delay to mean that his colleagues were yet uncertain. At moments he feared some governmental interference acting through the powerful connection of Lord Benthorpe;

at others he regretted the enthusiasm he had shown at Placton for the new scheme. As the days passed, he grew into a feverish and restless state, very favourable for the due fruition of Mr Barnett's plans; and while I am bound to regret the pain which such a process inevitably caused my old friend, I am none the less constrained to admit its ultimate wisdom. Without some exercise of discipline, no organiser can marshal his forces; and it is to Mr Barnett's honour, that he never pursued such a method beyond the limits strictly necessary to the mutual benefit of himself and of the friends he would acquire.

Three weeks went by, and Mr Burden had worked himself into a state of nervous irritation pitiful for any to behold save those who, like his son, were aware of the ultimate advantage to which it would lead.

The merchant no longer mentioned the M'Korio directly, but he continually brought home new books upon that river; he purchased a new atlas; he visited upon two occasions the rooms of ill-frequented museums. His dignity, which prevented him from betraying to Cosmo his immeasurable anxieties, did not debar him from a ceaseless conversation which was unnatural and strange in him; he spoke of Oxford, of Placton, of geography, of the

Roman Empire, of savages, of command of the sea, of governing races, of the *Times* newspaper, of wars. And, all the while, Cosmo, with tenacious care, warded off every allusion that pointed to the forbidden subject; under his indefatigable calm, his imperturbable good-humour, his father's health threatened to give way.

In early May a coincidence brought to maturity this period of preparation. Mr Burden saw in the *Times* (which paper he read at breakfast) that a German company designed to acquire concessions in the Delta; in the full agony of this news, he learnt—upon the same morning—that Cosmo would meet Mr Barnett at luncheon. The father and the son went into town together. The morning was not without tension. Towards one o'clock came the moment when the tension could no longer endure.

There was perfect restraint and good feeling in the little scene. Cosmo took his hat in the office, and remembered to say that he should be a trifle late in returning, because he expected Mr Barnett would appear at the club. Just as he went out, his father, with unnatural joviality, suggested that they should lunch together—they so rarely lunched together. Cosmo's hesitation was not noticeable. Mr Burden

rose; and so, for the second time, he came to, and was not sought by, Imperial things.

They sat at a little table in a vast room, over-luxurious but grand; they had already ordered and received the baked mutton and cabbage of their choice; when Cosmo stood up and greeted warmly a figure, large and benignant, which had appeared beside him. It was Mr Barnett.

A whirl of confused emotions ran through the mind of Mr Burden. The public reputation was one thing to him, the splendid coat of astrachan quite another; and when speech began, the accent, gesture, and expression meant yet a third. At the introduction, Mr Barnett bowed from the hips, mechanically and low, his chin upon his chest—a fourth confusion combined with the others, where had Mr Burden seen that posture before? He could not remember—then it returned to him: it was in 1878, in a farce called *The Cologne Express;* never in real life had he seen such a salutation.

Mr Barnett drew a chair to the table, sat down, and cleared his throat with the energy characteristic of a master. Several men in the club started round, and, seeing who it was, smiled; two nodded: to one of them his nod was returned. Then Mr Barnett, putting both his weighty hands upon the table, slowly

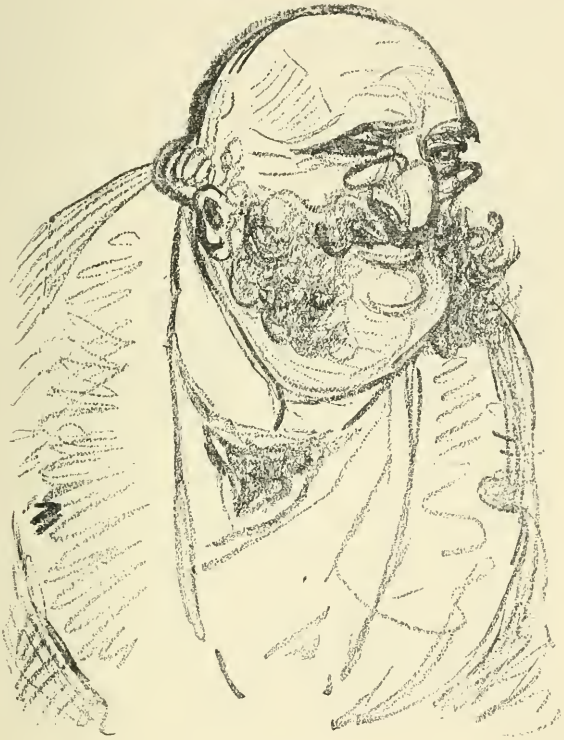
twirled his powerful if spatulate thumbs. He spoke at last in the tone of decision and initiative which gives such men authority. His voice was directed towards a waiter of terrified appearance; he ordered a bottle of "one hunderd and eighty," and, when the bottle came, a fifth emotion entered Mr Burden's mind, to observe that it was champagne.

Mr Barnett smiled.

Leaders of men have led men always by a smile. Here also was a leader, and it is my duty to describe at great length this individual charm.

When Mr Barnett smiled, his lips, which he kept closed, did not bend upwards as they do with commoner and weaker men, but downwards like an arch, lending an astonishing vigour to his expression: the lower one, never of a retiring curve, was thrust out superbly, glorying in its capacity, and the whole mouth, never exiguous, assumed heroic dimensions; the while for a moment his considerable eyes gleamed with kindly intelligence. At their corners, three deep furrows spread rapidly to his temples to disappear in the massive substance of his face, when its features reassumed their normal and somewhat drooping calm.

Such was Mr Barnett during these rare flashes which his friends already knew, and



THE SMILE

which, after he had made the M'Korio, were destined to captivate no less than two crowned heads, a Prime Minister, four Admirals, ten General Officers, editors in great profusion, innumerable professors, and a whole army of divines.

Such was the smile which illuminated the very man from within, irradiated his genius and his vision, fascinated for a moment—and was gone.

Not till he had drunk one glass of "one hundred and eighty" did Mr Barnett fix his eyes upon Mr Burden, and tell him, in a measured manner, with what pleasure he now met, by chance, a gentleman with whom their arrangements were so soon to be made. Having once broken the subtle barrier which separates individuals and races from one another, Mr Barnett manifested himself a moulder and a maker of things in justly ordered sentences, whereby he settled, within a few moments, permitting no interruption, the nature of the syndicate which would be formed, the few to whom any knowledge of it should be confined, and its object in the laying of a foundation for what was to be the development of the M'Korio.

Before Mr Burden well knew what had been done, he was pledged to meet his colleagues upon that day week at the Plantagenet Club.

His adhesion had been but one disconnected phrase at the close of Mr Barnett's order of the day: of so urgent a kind is the influence of those who once perhaps led armies, but who are now the captains of greater forces, leading to victories which no soldier of the past could understand.

This done, Mr Barnett drank another glass of champagne, and then the best part of a third, in silence, holding the edge of the table with his bent hands, and gazing down. At last he twice pronounced the English word "So," sighed heavily across the table, rose up, as rise the terrible but majestic pachyderms of the Asiatic continent, smiled once again, bowed, turned to the distant door, shook its lintel with the stately emphasis of his tread, and disappeared in an atmosphere of dignity which nothing marred, save the slight, continuous curve of his back—an accident due to the obesity of his advancing years.

The influence of the rare over the more common mind, though by it alone can the purpose of the world be forwarded, is not imposed without friction and occasional pain.

Mr Burden suffered from an anarchy of thought, perhaps, more than from a sense of dependence or of peril; yet he suffered, and Cosmo noted that he suffered. When, there-

fore, his father hinted that he should return with him to Norwood and share another unaccustomed meal, he had the self-control to postpone the pleasure of a dinner he had promised himself among friends in Covent Garden, and to come to the comfort and aid of the parent, of whose old age he had become a kind of guardian and director.

Safe back at Avonmore, when they had dined together alone in more than a hour of silence, Mr Burden begged his son, upon whose judgment he had begun to lean with pathetic but insufficient faith, to come a walk with him towards the heights of the hills. They had not gone far in the warm, long evening, before Mr Burden, who had been looking towards the setting sun in silence, spoke out.

"Cosmo," he said — his voice had in it hesitation, and something approaching querulousness, "these things have a way of becoming much bigger than one likes." Then he added: "I have not had anything yet to do with the," he hesitated, "the . . . preparation of a chartered company; but I know that it may cost very little or a great deal . . . and you know, Cosmo, the money would be in other hands. I could furnish my share for that preliminary expense; I could do nothing more."

Then he waited as though for a reply, though he had asked no question.

Walking slowly by his side, and in a tone of thought, Cosmo, with one of those flashes of modest common sense, which had recently so delighted his father, pointed out, that the sums subscribed to such syndicates were necessarily large, but that they were by no means necessarily spent. They were a margin. He gave instances from his reading, and one or two from the experiences of his friends. He defended the Press from any silly accusation of corruption; but he insisted upon the great expense of producing a modern newspaper, upon its vast circulation, upon the cost of advertisement, which was sometimes spared by the spontaneous action of public interest, but had always to be provided for.

His father assented and listened.

Cosmo then showed how, in such a State as ours, it is necessary that men of great position should ultimately take their share in any quasi-political adventure, and, though, of course, no direct expense was incurred in exciting the interest of politicians, yet indirectly the charges were sometimes heavy, and must, in any case, be foreseen.

Mr Burden, for his part, reminded his son that the smaller the number of an original

syndicate the larger the individual contribution. He feared that he must be prepared for an immediate sinking of many thousands of pounds; it might be thirty, it might even be forty. Much more than that had been sunk by the first founders of the Seychelles Company.

Cosmo did not miss so obvious an introduction to his theme. His father could not deny that the men who risked so much upon the Seychelles were now among the greatest and best of the commonwealth; and he showed very clearly that, if such syndicates were not formed by a limited number of men, and those able to and ready to invest largely, the chances of success would be small. Nor did he omit to praise Lord Benthorpe with respect, Mr Barnett with awe, and Mr Harbury with affection.

Across Mr Burden's mind there passed suddenly the features of his friend, Mr Abbott. For a moment, perhaps, he thought of taking advice in that quarter also. He wisely dismissed the thought from his mind, or at least postponed it until the first step should have been taken.

They had by this time arrived at the top of the hill, and were turned in reverie northward and westward, to where the light was declining redly behind evanescent effects of smoky cloud.

The soft air of Surrey blew upon them as they gazed; it was laden with those peculiar subtleties which only Londoners can understand. It came from the glorious heaths of Putney; from Kingston where the woods and the river meet; it bore the spirit of Battersea, of Clapham, of the Kennington Oval . . . there lingered in it suggestions of the "Elephant and Castle," of Camberwell, of the majestic Thames itself: it blew upon and soothed the father and the son, so that their conclusions ran together, and the old man was ready for the venture which the younger man defended.

When they had stood still a moment, to receive this influence before turning back homewards, Mr Burden, even as they turned, looked at Cosmo and said more softly:

"It will be your money, Cosmo. Remember that. I am speaking to you about your own money."

Cosmo answered in the voice of one who is touched: a voice, which was perhaps the noblest thing of the many noble things he had acquired in his academic training:

"People talk like that, father . . . but it is yours, and will be yours for very many years; it is you who may treble it or lose it."

In the emotion of the moment, they walked from Nelson Street to the corner of Kipling

Gardens before Cosmo spoke again, then he said :

"If it were mine to-day, I should do it all the more. You know more about it, father, but you've asked me, and I have told you what I think."

Cosmo was right.

He is, indeed, no longer a shareholder in the company, nor was he even a shareholder when the Government bought at $5\frac{3}{8}$xd ; but he held for a full seven months after his father's death, he sold at $17\frac{1}{4}$, and a good two-thirds of the fortune he now enjoys is due to his sound judgment during that evening walk in Upper Norwood.

. . . . . .

I have written "when the Government bought at $5\frac{3}{8}$." The thought has perhaps no right to appear in this account, but I cannot forbear to place on record my regret that Mr Burden did not live to see that great silent scene in the House of Commons when the Government announced their intention of buying out the Company. It would have set his foolish doubts at rest, and would perhaps have preserved a life of such value to the Empire, to the City, and to the residential portion of South London. I knew him perhaps better than other man knew him (if Mr

O'Rourke will forgive the phrase); and I am most confident that the King's Own Ministers purchasing, in their public capacity, the rights of the Company for the nation, at the price of $5\frac{3}{8}$xd, would have satisfied every murmur and every suspicion in the mind of the man who some months before, was for casting all away at $2_{16}^{7}$. Alas! before even the first negotiations had been opened at Lady Manningham's garden party, my dear old friend was dead.

. . . . . .

It took five days to make those arrangements which Mr Burden found necessary to put within his immediate call the sum of £50,000. What those arrangements were my commercial readers can easily guess, my non-commercial readers would be at a loss to comprehend. That large class who, like myself, comprehend them, and yet are not commercial, would discover nothing but tedium in their recital.

That so considerable an amount was realised so soon, was due to a variety of settlements; the selling of stock, the immediate discounting of certain maturing bills, but principally to an advance very readily made by the bank, and that at a rate of interest which seemed to Mr Burden so generous as to be, in the technical language of commerce, "almost nominal." Indeed, it raised him very appreciably in his

own opinion; and made him see in himself a man of greater position than he had imagined.

I am betraying no confidence when I say that the ease with which this loan was obtained was in no small part due to the universal activity of One Who has often appeared in the pages of this sad record. If any further reward beyond the natural pleasure which proceeds from a good action may be of value to Him, He may take this assurance from my pen that He made a good man happy for more than thirty-six hours.

On the evening before his rendezvous at the Plantagenet Club, Mr Burden, as usual, returned to his home by the 5.13. Cosmo he did not expect; for the young man moved, as his father well knew, in another, and as he hoped, a better world. He read, therefore, all that evening, to beguile his thoughts, a novel dealing with the conflict between science and religion. At half-past ten he went to bed.

It is a matter somewhat curious, but vouched for by a serving maid of the name of Hannah, who brought hot water to his room, that he said his prayers. I mention the point only to illustrate the attitude of his mind at this critical moment. He went to sleep before eleven; but his sleep was disturbed with dreams; in these dreams the grotesque, unhappily, mixed

with the terrible, and there ran through them that reminiscence of the immediate past which is a sure sign of disturbance in the Ganglions of the Cerebellum.

He dreamt that many men of many kinds were offering him money in incredible amounts, as loans, as gifts, as reversions, as exorbitant prices for securities which he held; and yet these offers did not please, but vaguely disturbed him, for they were made by sundry beings with faces always distorted, sometimes horrible, who sat beside him on the seat of a hansom cab, wherein he drove. In the corners of this cab, before him, were bottles of champagne. It was brilliantly lit, and he could see outside in the darkness between the shafts, that it was drawn not by a horse, but by his friend Mr Abbott. The dream was evil, and, though he knew not by what the cab was driven, yet he knew there sat up there some Thing which he did not care to think of, and which he did not dare to see. Twice he would have lifted the trap to glance furtively; twice his hand failed him and his body grew quite cold with fear. Such is the nature of dreams, that he found the event but ordinary when the hansom turned into a bath chair, running of itself, and this again to his own bed, which seemed to be at once in his own bedroom, and yet in a

THE BISHOP OF SHOREHAM (THE HONBLE. THE REV. PEREGRINE MAUCLERC) SITTING AS AN ASSESSOR AT THE TRIAL OF CANON CONE FOR HERESY, PIRACY, CONSPIRACY AND SCHISM

AN EXCELLENT LIKENESS, WHICH WE TAKE FROM THE "CONE TRIAL ILLUSTRATED SUPPLEMENT" OF "CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS"

crowded street; up and down this street he noticed a multitude of people, nearly all of whom he knew, going to their business. The last of them came, a healthy, up-standing figure, tall, strong, rubicund; he was well familiar with it: it was that of the Honourable, the Reverend Peregrine Mauclerc, vicar of St Judas's, Denmark Hill, a church he constantly attended. This figure, passing rapidly, nodded at him in a breezy way, and cried cheerfully and very loudly: "It will be paid for in shares." Then an awful spasm of pain, come and gone in a twinkling, incredibly severe, shot through his chest; and Mr Burden suddenly awoke.

He was gasping and sitting upright; to his astonishment it was quite dark. Never had his regular sleep been broken by such a sharp and dreadful agony: rarely had it been broken at all for many years. Indeed, since his father's death, and the relief from political discussion which followed it, he could remember nothing of the night save evening, and then daylight again.

But now he found himself staring at darkness, with his left hand at his chest. The pain had darted and vanished like the stab of a dagger; but the shock was still in his brain.

There lay under his pillow a gold watch,

presented to him, after their release, by the officers and men of the Commander-in-Chief's Own Fighting Body-guard, in recognition of his services and generous subscription to the Prisoners' Funds. It was of great value; upon sliding a small spring along the side this watch would strike the hours and the quarters and the minutes, while pressure upon one of three jewelled buttons caused it to render *Hearts of Oak*, or *The Wearing of the Green*, or Mr Kipling's *Kill 'im wid yer mouf;* but these Mr Burden very properly left silent, save when he would amuse the children of his friends.

Mr Burden pressed the spring: it chimed him half-past two, and then three little tinkling minutes. Mr Burden did not lie down. He still sat up there in bed, his left hand on his chest, his right hand upon the pillow supporting him: and still he stared at darkness.

There are moments, under the brooding fixity of the night, when the mind loses foothold. The man was old, his infirmity of purpose in the single matter of this new investment I have described; his doubts, which were the product of a morbid atmosphere rather than of a reasoned view; his fear, which had become an irritable fear.

All these the night increased. The magni-

tude of the sum he risked, the still greater peril of the adventure into which that day would lead, appalled him. He was in great dread and disquiet of mind, and he felt, though he did not know it, like those young poetasters who put into their verse the longing to be in other times and away from something evil in the modern world. It was a mood of intense weakness, due, I believe, to illness alone, but it affected all his attitude during the ensuing days.

After some twenty minutes of this suffering he slept again, uneasily, dreaming confused dreams; he woke again in the grey light for a moment, his mind troubled by some phantasm of a quarrel waged in sleep, and he tossed into the morning. By seven he could rest no more. He got up and dressed; day and activity began to invigorate his mind. The quiet confidence of Cosmo at breakfast, the leader in *The Times* upon the corruption of Russia, the cat upon the rug—all the familiar things of home strengthened him, like sacraments, for the thing that he had to do.

Only once that morning did his miserable hesitation return. It was when he found himself in the station at Norwood, standing, not on the platform for the City, but opposite, on that for Victoria. The novelty of the thing again disturbed him; but he was brave. He

shook off the influence, and, when he stepped out at his journey's end, the movement and the vigour of the streets revived in him a better mood. His confidence increased as he stepped through the summer morning; he entered Pall Mall briskly, in the attitude of expectation and advance, and he went up the steps of the Plantagenet Club with something as near triumph in his heart as men of that sober and even temper can feel.

This was not an end for which he had worked; it came as a kind of unexpected reward for a life that had been regular, industrious, and, in its fundamental emotions, consistently patriotic. Of the many feelings which men have mixed in them upon those great days when they are admitted to take an active part in the expansion of our power, two were supreme in him at that moment. He felt, with a freshness almost of youth, as though he were himself about to create a new thing on the map of the world.

He felt the warmth which cannot but accompany a prospect of additional fortune.

From these two sources there proceeded an exultation which was not ignoble, and which went forward with a conquering movement, lifting his heart as he entered the great doors.

Within those doors some indefinable cold

breath did strike him. Even in that present mood of his, he could not shake off an impression of strangeness. The furniture was not what he knew; it was recent; it belonged to a more glorious but certainly a less commodious age.

It was bent into the strangest patterns; fantastic curves met here and there in the faces of young unhappy women. There was applied to it by screws moulding which would have required the utmost art of the sculptor had it not consisted of composition.

The club quartered the three leopards of Anjou, gules regardant on a field argent with the Lys semé argent upon a field azure: in chief a crown royal and supporters, dexter, a lion rampant languetirant, sinister an unicorn, enchainé: gartiered the device, "Honi soit qui mal 'pense,'" and the legend "Dieu et mon Droit" real. This coat was blazoned above the mantelpiece, on the backs of the sofas, the buttons of the servants' livery, the notepaper and the china; it was woven into the tapestry; it covered the seats of the chairs; nowhere was the proud title of that house left unsymbolised.

In the general decoration of the hall and of the rooms, enormous masses of perfectly new gilding lit up the interior with a grandeur that

recalled Empire indeed, but suggested also the strain inseparable from great possessions; and, in between the gilding, panels of a dead foreign white forbade Mr Burden such repose as he imagined should pervade a London room.

There were, it is true, upon the walls, reproductions of eighteenth century engravings, very charmingly framed in the American manner. The good taste of their arrangement was marked: they were few and widely spread; but of this Mr Burden knew nothing; his age had narrowed him, and he did not comprehend our day.

He stood in the midst of the hall, as might some sea-faring man who had sailed and found a people most unlike his own. He stood and waited. Then the stronger mood returned to him, and he forgot these things; for Lord Benthorpe, Mr Barnett and Mr Harbury had come into the room together. He went forward to meet them.

When they had shaken hands, Mr Barnett, absent-minded as are many men of his calibre, went before them with unconscious mastery, and led them into a little room apart, where they could talk undisturbed; and this had been reserved for him, for in that club Mr Barnett held already the position which in a few years he was to hold in the commonwealth

itself. Here, in this small room, were the same good taste, the same grandeur of decoration ; but, for Mr Burden, now recovered, no longer the same feeling of ill-ease.

They sat grouped round a table of fumed oak, on which a dainty printed card begged members to pay for the refreshments of their guests, while above them hung a very sensible admonition against the bestowal of gratuities upon the domestics of these regal rooms.

They sat for a full quarter of an hour, talking in sparse and careless sentences, now of politics, now of some book, and each from time to time would look up cheerfully and say that they should be getting to business.

Already had Mr Burden professed his interest in the architecture of the club (for they had drifted on to that topic), when Mr Barnett replied, quite suddenly, that they had but one thing to settle that day, and that thing was the sum which they four must syndicate before the promotion was entered upon. He waited for no comment, but continued with equal abruptness, saying that, so far as he could see, a hundred thousand pounds between them would command all that was required for the security of their further steps ; and, when he had said this, he sat silently,

with his great hands upon his great knees, looking down upon the floor at his feet.

Lord Benthorpe had the advantage of Mr Barnett in a wider knowledge of the world, and, from his Parliamentary training, a kind of subdued fluency. Mr Barnett had brought out the sum of money almost brutally. He had spoken rather slowly, choosing his words, as he always did. It was a necessity for him, if he was to avoid the slight foreign accent and the suspicion of foreign idiom, which even so he could not quite eliminate. After that hard and broken phrasing, it was a relief to hear Lord Benthorpe. His amiable mouth lay open between each phrase, his eyes roved from one object to another around the room; he sat, indeed, too far from the table to relieve upon it the appetite for movement which pursued his fingers, but he twisted them in and out by way of pastime during his discourse.

"I think," he said, in a thin voice, well suited to dialectic, "I think the sum is large . . . larger perhaps than is necessary. In theory, as it were, there is very little needed. . . . I know one must always have a platform, as it were . . . we shall have initial expenses, so to speak . . . but . . ."

And then the voice of Lord Benthorpe died away.

Mr Harbury joined in with a more definite remark :

" If anything the sum should be greater."

He said it with the decision and simplicity common to men of his type when they discuss a great financial matter. They are in daily contact with these things, and they speak of them as you and I speak of a road with which we are familiar, or of any of the common actions of life. He continued :

" It should be greater, because the whole thing is a reserve for a very important campaign. Lord Benthorpe is right. In theory there is nothing needed ; in practice, very often the expenses are small. But one must have a perfectly free hand. One must know exactly what one is doing, and one must never be forced to hesitate from lack of funds." He paused a moment, as though looking about him to find a convenient phrase which would not wound.

" A thing like this," he went on, still firmly, " which is mainly political, may mean less expense than a scheme purely commercial, but it may also mean a sudden and unexpected strain."

Then, as men do who are wiser than their fellows in the matter they discuss, he added an abrupt example :

"Do you remember the Thibet irrigation loan?"

Lord Benthorpe looked at him and nodded, more from courtesy than from any other motive, for, as a fact, he had never heard of it.

"I remember it too," said Mr Harbury grimly, "and that came of what I call starving."

He looked at them with a steady confidence, knowing his ground thoroughly, and continued:

"We are all of us men of substance, and men of affairs, and we can all, if we like, increase the sum."

Here Mr Burden nodded. For the first time in the conversation he clearly understood one whole phrase.

Lord Benthorpe was almost agitated.

"We could always add," he said, if there were any necessity"; and, as he said it, the little nervous trick with his hands began again.

Mr Harbury shut his lips very tight. When he opened them it was to say:

"You can't do business that way," and then he shut them again.

Mr Burden thought he would speak, and did so, with a mixture of sense and self-respect:

"I shall be happy to abide by any decision that you come to, gentlemen. I was certainly prepared, now or ultimately, for a much larger sum. . . . But I will, of course, be bound by Lord Benthorpe's prudence; and by the sense

of you all, gentlemen; . . . by the sense of you all."

Mr Burden delighted in these phrases; they gave him a solid pleasure; and he went on:

"For my part," . . . he was about to tell them that for his part he thought that more was needed, when he suddenly remembered that he was hopelessly out of his depth, and putting on a look of firmness and reflection, he was silent:

Lord Benthorpe, began:

"Still, so far as I can see . . . " then he also remembered that he knew nothing at all about such things, and was silent in his turn, still preserving over his projecting teeth that wide, open, permanent and kindly smile, still twisting his refined and lengthy fingers.

Mr Harbury had already said: "After all, we shall only be out of our money for a few" . . . when Mr Barnett interrupted, with his strong and ponderous voice.

When two such men begin talking together, there is usually a kind of battle to see which voice shall survive; but the relations between Mr Harbury and Mr Barnett were such, that Mr Harbury at once yielded, not without grace, and Mr Barnett, choosing his words, and speaking very slowly, taking care to make a "d" a "d," and a "t" a "t," and steering firmly past the "th," rolled out:

"It must be a hunderd thousand."

Mr Harbury said that the Magnetic syndicate, if he remembered rightly, had subscribed something of the same kind during the Greenland excitement. Mr Burden, who had read all about the Greenland excitement in the papers, exclaimed: "What a time that was!" Mr Harbury then added that there were infinite possibilities all across the north of Canada, and especially on the lower Snake river.

Lord Benthorpe told, at somewhat too great a length, a story about his cousin, Charlie Corne, who had gone shooting up there. Mr Harbury listened with great interest, and remarked that it was nothing to the Big Moose country; and that led him to speak about the fishing there, and that to the harbour, and that to the dispute with Russia.

For close upon an hour their speech turned thus upon those things wherein a conquering race delights; and if I have painted the scene of their first meeting at so great a length, and in such detail, it is but due to my desire that every member of this race, who may read these pages, shall know in what an atmosphere the crucial decisions of their history are decided.

The interest flagged. Lord Benthorpe had repeated the same sentence two or three times; Mr Harbury had not spoken for close

MR. BURDE.. OFFERING TO SUBSCRIBE WHATEVER MAY BE NECESSARY

upon eight minutes, when Mr Barnett closed the scene. He got up with the air of a man, heavy with creative power, one who has accomplished a long and finally successful task; Mr Harbury got up like an athlete ready for new labours, standing erect and supple. Lord Benthorpe got up, as politicians do, wearily, and by sections of his frame; and Mr Burden got up, as do merchants, with some fuss, rubbing his hands, and pulling occasionally at his coat.

It was not his habit to leave a business interview without some final phrase. He would have thought it discourteous. He stood, therefore, a little pompously, and, looking at Mr Barnett, addressed him in the plural, and said:

"Remember, gentlemen, I shall be very happy, if there is any occasion, to post you my cheque to-night for a larger . . ."

But Mr Harbury put up his hand with authority, and interfered:

"Do not mention it, Mr Burden; the suggestion was mine, but I think Mr Barnett has thoroughly proved to us that the sum proposed is sufficient."

Then he let his hand drop again, and Mr Burden bowed, and they all went out of the room.

So it was that, two days afterwards, Mr Burden paid not forty, nor even thirty, but only twenty-five thousand pounds.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE Rev. Charles Gapworthy, B.A., sometime fellow and chaplain of St Lazarus' Hys Hostel, Bermondsey, S.E., tells us in his "Political Economy for Schools" (chap. ii. "Capital," p. 28) that "economic force resides ultimately, not in material accumulation, but in a certain bold prevision of the mind." The truth is but one more example of the power residing in what we denominate, in this country, the "Christian virtue of Hope."

The M'Korio Delta Development Company had been but an idea. That idea had even seemed, for some months, to languish,, when the accession of Mr Burden's reputation, his Faith (which had made the formation of the syndicate possible), and, for that matter, his twenty-five thousand pounds, though they were but the outward sign of inward spiritual things, lent to the whole adventure body and life. Its aspect changed; it became concrete, as it were: a thing to be named, handled, criticised, combated, defended with passionate enthusiasm; a national Force in Being.

THE REV. CHARLES GAIWORTHY, B.A.
(FROM A BLOCK VERY KINDLY LENT BY "THE ST. LAZARUS HYS HOSTEL MAGAZINE; A REVIEW OF SOCIAL PROGRESS")

Mr Barnett was the first to sacrifice himself in the cause for which so many in the end laid down their all. He left the Edgeware Road, and took a considerable mansion overlooking the Park, convenient to the Twopenny Tube, possessing a southern aspect, and so near to the Marble Arch as to boast nobility of site. He thought it his duty (and the future has proved him wise) to hire a carriage with two horses, men in livery, and a box at the Opera: nor did he hesitate to ensure to the daily papers, even to those with whose editors he was intimate, a fixed contract of advertisement, in return for which, as the courtesy of journalism demands, certain of his doings were published, and commentary upon others omitted.

If it be true, as Canon Cone has so beautifully put it in his Christmas sermon on Kingdom, that "we can serve England better with our heads than with our hearts," most nobly did Mr Barnett serve her.

His dinners, the principal of which were given weekly upon Fridays, when Parliament was resting from its labours and before the well-earned week-end had begun, his dinners, I say, recruited their guests with a peculiar discretion. Rarely did more than twenty sit down together, never, even when that number

was exceeded, did men or cooking of inferior value weaken the effect of the meal.

Gatherings less formal distinguished or enlivened the remaining evenings, saving that of the Sabbath, which, in fine contrast to so many around him, Mr Barnett remembered to keep it holy.

His suggestions were an inspiration, not only to the young men whom he had launched into our world of Letters, but to a multitude who had hitherto known him only by repute, and who, in spite of the legendary difficulty of approaching so great a man, were introduced to him in batches—before lunch, at tea times, and (by appointment) in the early morning.

By a happy coincidence, the very force of things seemed to fight upon his side. "The stars in their courses," as Canon Cone, careless of political opposition,[1] magnificently put it, "fought for," the tradition of which Mr Barnett was but a part, however distinguished.

Men influenced by Mr Barnett in no way; men who had never met him, were caught by the flame of his genius.

Sir Philip Marshall, for example, if anything a recluse, sent to *The Nineteenth Century* (and after) from his distant home at the Land's End,

[1] As the scurrilous poem beginning "It is, it is the Canon's opening roar," or the deliberate misprinting of the peroration to his Romanes lecture on Historical Christianity, "The soul of Ananias like a star," etc.

CANON CONE DELIVERING HIS CHIVALROUS ATTACK UPON THE INCARNATION
(A THUMBNAIL SKETCH TAKEN BY THE REPORTER OF "CHRISTENDOM," AND CALLED BY HIM "CANON CONE IN ACTION")

CANON CONE IN REPOSE, DISCUSSING MATTERS UNCONNECTED WITH DOGMA AT THE DUCHESS OF LAVINGTON'S
(A SKETCH PURCHASED FROM HER GRACE'S SECRETARY AT THE TIME NOW DOOR-KEEPER AT THE VARIETY, BISMARK, PA., U.S.A.)

his famous article upon Germany and the M'Korio valley.

Young Coster chose for his principal picture of the year the title, "Moonrise upon the Marshes of the M'Korio." It was hung upon the line . . . and so upwards to the ceiling, and though its dimensions caused a considerable portion of its area to escape the eyes of the spectator, its main features attracted universal attention. Indeed, it was in stepping back to obtain a comprehensive view of it, that Sir Henry Baile cannoned into the aged Duchess of Lavington, who was herself lost in contemplation of the canvas. The contretemps and the unhappy scene it led to, would be too trivial to find a mention here did they not serve to show the public zeal for all that concerned the M'Korio. That picture also furnishes, by the way, what I believe to be the only example of any direct interference on the part of Mr Burden himself with a national enthusiasm which he rightly regarded as the stronger for its spontaneity: I mean the little note in which he begged the artist to change the word "marshes" to "lagoons," a request which was at once complied with.

In the New Gallery a powerful piece of impressionism, "The River of Fate," by Miss Paxter, turned upon the same theme: all

London talked of the blue-eyed Somersetshire lad, who lay there in his khaki, floating with upturned face upon the dark waters. The public subscription which was raised for his aged parents, and their subsequent conviction for fraud, are not to the purpose of my tale, unless it be to take this opportunity of defending Miss Paxter with all the warmth of which I am capable, from the suggestion that she knew the old people to be childless, or the incident itself to be fictitious.

A further proof of Mr Barnett's self-abnegation, and of the absence of all financial pressure, during the growth of the movement, exists in the fact that Messrs Pscheuffer, desiring to publish a book upon the M'Korio Delta, wrote to Mr Barnett, and that he, with a fine sense of what was due to his honour, refused to write so much as the preface, or even to accept the dedication of the volume. He referred the firm to Major Pondo, and washed his hands off the whole matter.

The success of the M'Korio village at Earl's Court, if a plebeian, was yet a genuine indication of the popular feeling. It was crowded throughout the season ; and the chief, a magnificent Basuto named Issachar, was pensioned by an enthusiastic admirer who prefers to remain anonymous.

DR. MOHL
FROM THE OIL PAINTING PRESENTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF DORPOTT BY HIS MAJESTY WILLIAM II, EMPEROR AND KING

Even the neglected museum of Theoretical Geography received, for the first time in forty years, a daily influx of visitors eager to behold the raised map of the M'Korio Delta. The absolute flatness, and consequent ease of cultivation, of the region could not be better appreciated than in this graphic form.

Two rival hosiers, having each patented a type of collar under the name of "The M'Korio," went to law to decide which should have the right of using so valuable a title. The case was reported at great length, and aroused the widest interest and discussion. It is one of his many acts of private generosity, so few of which I have been able to record in this book, that Mr Barnett recouped the loser of this action for his trouble and expense out of his own pocket, and gave him a handsome present beside.

Finally, in a *brochure* of the utmost interest, based upon vast research, and expressed with admirable economy of proof, Dr Mohl, of the University of Dorpat, conclusively identified the Delta with the Sheol of the Old Testament.

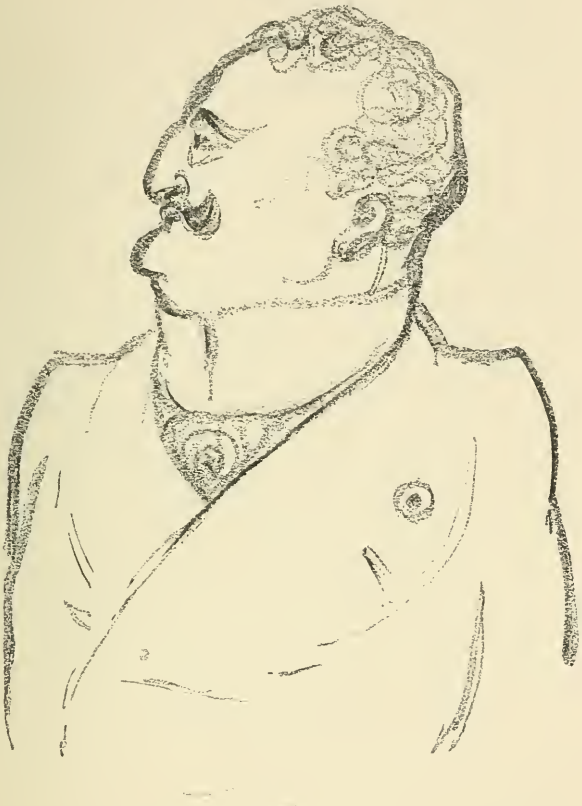
I would it were my lot to set down nothing save the positive side of this wave of success; but I owe it to Mr Barnett, and also to the truth, to touch upon such opposition as the movement encountered.

This opposition was not always consciously exerted. It existed none the less.

An article appeared in a German Review advocating the purchase of the Delta by Germany, with one of whose colonies it was coterminous. The wound it dealt was the deeper from the fact that Mr Barnett's own second cousin, Baron Bloch, was the author of the article, which appeared above his pseudonym of "Sympathicus." It was good to hear the outburst of indignation with which this proposal was met in England. We were saved by the rally of our own blood to our side. The article "Git," which appeared in the principal American newspaper in London, was undoubtedly the turning point, after which the City and the banking interest determined to support what was feared at the time to be the vacillating policy of the Government.

Owing to the persistence of a very wealthy private member, whom no arguments could mollify, unexpected difficulties arose in the transference of the Delta from the Foreign to the Colonial Office, a trifling but necessary formality which could not be accomplished till much later, in August, when the close season for grouse was at an end.

The correspondent of *The Times* at Kurù, in a long course of articles, which did more than



BARON BLOCH
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY M. M. BALLARU ET CIE., 147 *bis*, RUE ST. LOUP. LES CLICHÉS SONT LA PROPRIÉTÉ EXCLUSIVE DE LA MAISON)

anything else to teach the monied classes what the M'Korio might mean, never once mentioned the company nor any of its supporters —and there are conditions under which such neutrality is dangerous.

Against all this Mr Barnett bore up with an heroic tenacity.

There was but one feature in all the field before him which gave him any serious anxiety, and this was that unhappy vacillation which I have already so often shown Mr Burden to have displayed, from the moment that he plunged into efforts ill-suited to his training and experience.

It was necessary, upon the face of it, that Mr Abbott should be invited to join the original promoters, to "chip in," as Mr Barnett put it in somewhat excessive joviality of phrase.

But Mr Abbott was Faroosh. None but Mr Burden could approach him, and frequently as he had been asked to do so, Mr Burden hesitated; a childish hesitation; a man shrinking from a scene.

But if Mr Abbott's directorship could wait, there were other and more disquieting symptoms in Mr Burden's manner. He had fits of silence. For days he saw eye to eye with all his colleagues—and then, suddenly, a note would come, short, querulous, excusing himself from

attending the most important functions. At last, during the great reception in the beginning of July, Mr Barnett grew seriously concerned.

My pen has not the leisure to describe the brilliancy of that function. It was a scene which could not be matched in any capital of Europe, hardly in London itself, elsewhere than in the little district which is bounded on the north by Hyde Park Square and Seymour Street, on the east by Park Street, on the south and west by the misty distances of Hyde Park. It was worthy of all that was said of it in the *Morning Post* upon the one hand, in the *Indépendence Belge* upon the other—but I can mention it only in connection with Mr Burden's distressing mutability.

One thing had given Mr Barnett real hope; and that was Mr Burden's attitude towards what I may call the more common-place side of all this matter of the M'Korio. A very genuine interest had appeared in the old man's face whenever he discussed the history or the geography of the M'Korio. There ran through hischaracter that tendency towards futile pottering which led our grandfathers—with a mighty empire before them—to waste their energies upon the foundation of learned societies. During those enormous dinners, where every celebrity had elbowed him, Mr Burden had

often given cause for the very gravest fears to the more masterful mind of the leader. But whenever he had an opportunity of discussing Dr Mohl's pamphlet with such experts as M. Sabbat or Canon Cone, his animation and delight relieved Mr Barnett's apprehension. On the famous night when the first of our geologists maintained the undoubted presence of gold in the M'Korio, and when, in the startled silence that followed, Mr Barnett (smiling that famous smile) had handed the model of the nugget from guest to guest, Mr Burden, ignoring all that the news portended for his country, showed an excited interest in the unique geological conditions which could produce metallic deposits in a deep bed of decomposing vegetable matter.

It was with confidence, therefore, that, on the occasion of this great reception at Barnett House, the host led Mr Burden proudly forward to present him to Major Pondo, whose book, "The African River," had during the past six days marked him out as the chief expert upon that region.

The centre of every remark, the chief object of every introduction throughout the evening, and now, upon Mr Burden's late arrival the natural recipient of his views, Major Pondo was for the moment one of the land marks of London.

It was observed that Mr Burden stopped somewhat suddenly, as in amazement, when he approached the soldier; and, indeed, the sight which met his gaze was novel to him, and might have proved entrancing to a better balanced mind.

Major Pondo, who boasted no regular commission from any crowned head or president, had yet perhaps seen more real fighting than any of those who are pleased to call themselves professional soldiers. Even in this brilliant assembly, a dark contusion upon his left cheek-bone was markedly visible, and a deep gash, clumsily sewn up across the cusp of the chin, marked an adventure suffered somewhere far from medical aid, In stature, he has been described as so short as to be almost dwarfish. It is an error into which my contemporaries have been led by the sturdy build and short, strong neck of the explorer. His exact height, as it appears in official records, where the photograph, thumb-marks, and many other accurate measurement of his anatomy are preserved, is 1·3587 metres, or in English notation, almost exactly five feet two inches.

Tropical suns and arctic snows in Mexico and Manitoba had tanned his skin to the colour of wet elm. His teeth were even and

MAJOR FONDO
(AN EXTRACT FROM THE PICTURE OF THE RECEPTION AT BARNETT HOUSE. BY THE COURTESY OF THE PROPRIETORS OF "SOCIAL SKETCHES," A WEEKLY MAGAZINE)

of a brilliant white, which stood in almost painful relief against the complexion I have described.

His head, which was of great size, was bald, save for a considerable cluster of hair at the back and just beside the ears. But though this adornment was sparse, it was never unkempt; and Mr Burden, while yet he was some way off, could distinguish upon it the gloss of a recent unguent. The scalp was a mighty dome, and over the eyes was fixed a frown, which indicated less a habit of scowling than the fixed impression of indomitable energy. The face was clean shaven, and the eyes of a beautiful soft brown, approaching black. Their glances were slow and measured, but seemed to betray a certain unfamiliarity with his surroundings. The right foot thrust out firmly a few inches before the left; the right hand, holding the coffee cup in a simple but powerful gesture, the left clenched just above the small of his back, such was the figure whose name at least is familiar to every Englishman, such was the human monolith which stood immovable in the swirling of the throng as Mr Burden approached it with wondering eyes. Mr Barnett introduced and left them together.

In that introduction the explorer had bowed, but had not uttered a word. To the first

remarks Mr Burden somewhat timidly made, he replied with gestures alone; to a compliment, with a slight smile; to a theory upon the climate of the M'Korio valley, with a cough that committed him to nothing.

My old friend has confessed to me that, for some moments, he was in dread lest Major Pondo might be dumb. He was even seized with a terror that the man was ill-acquainted with the English language, until the word "Yas!" mouthed out in the rich accent of Jamaica, convinced him that he was in error. It was the prelude to a short account, delivered as it were by rote, of the Major's life and adventures, at the close of which dark silence redescended. Mr Burden, so far from finding his suspicions allayed, was tortured with every manner of doubt.

If it were my purpose to defend my friend, I should find no difficulty in holding such a brief. It must be remembered that he was wholly ignorant of the new world into which he had wandered, and that men such as Major Pondo, or indeed any other of those who yearly and almost daily spread the bounds of our power, were quite unknown to him. His irritability and unstable spirit, the result, as I still believe, of old age, have been evident throughout these pages, and it must be added

that the hour was late—far later than the merchant would have permitted himself had he obeyed his medical adviser—that the glare, the heat, the multitude, all combined to arouse in him a morbid judgment, and to enflame distorted views which were due in the main to the failure of his health.

But it is not my business to defend him. I have no duty but to enumerate quite simply, the facts in their order. Were I to trespass upon another ground, I might find myself in competition with the labours of Mr and Mrs O'Rourke, the very mention of whose existence I particularly desire to avoid.

Be the cause what it may, when Mr Barnett returned to lead Mr Burden to another guest, so far from having brought my friend into greater harmony with the astounding energies of the new movement, he had produced, by that interview with Major Pondo, a sentiment —I repeat it, a morbid sentiment—approaching disgust.

There was nothing which, at that moment, Mr Burden would not have believed. There was no anti-patriotic libel, no little-England mania or lie, no dead and gone Cobdenism of the sixties, which he would not have accepted after that brief experience.

He left the house that night, full of a kind

of angry determination to go next day and do what he had never yet dared to do: to speak to Mr Abbott. But he would speak to him in a sense very different from that which Mr Barnett had intended when he had asked him to call upon that life-long friend, and to offer him a directorship. . . . He would see Abbott, he would tell him of the risk to a considerable fortune, of his doubts, of the torturing alternation of his mind: he would find true stable comradeship and relief.

Fate, and the nature of men, led on to their meeting indeed, but brought it, in spite of them both, to a very different end.

. . . . . .

When Mr Burden awoke next morning, the deep sleep of fatigue and the good light of a new day had somewhat changed his mood. There remained of it nothing but an undercurrent of anxiety, which the conversation of Cosmo that morning did very much to allay.

The day's business at the office was prosperous, the air bracing and sunny; if he found himself walking towards Mr Abbott's office that evening for the first time in so many weeks, it was only because he was a business man, trained to method, and that therefore he detested to abandon any resolve he had formed.

He came severely, and with a purpose, into

the little panelled room which had seen for 123 years the growth of the Abbott Line.

The place reeked of our past ; but there was that in it which has justly provided the financial press with a pet subject for ridicule. It was as small as the cabin of a ship ; indeed it had sheltered three generations of men who had sailed as owners perpetually in their own craft. It suggested the punch and the tobacco of that lazy race of seamen, who knew of nothing but England, and cared for nothing but her ; and yet—in a way—we love them. It suggested very primitive methods of business : phrases about " The position of the house," the plodding and the short-sightedness of the men whose theories in government and finance we have, please God, finally abandoned. And at the old large desk, in this old small room, sat a figure most worthy of its frame.

Mr Abbot was in everything one of the characters which, pleasing as they may still be in fiction to-day, would be sand in the bearings of England, ruining the machine, were they to reappear in our modern life.

There was nothing in him of what a true citizen has under the stress and vision of our time.

He was tall, stout, and rubicund ; his voice, which was louder than that of a gentleman

should be, pushed "cheeriness" up to and beyond the bounds of vulgarity. The obstinacy which his features partly betrayed was immediately apparent when he began to discuss any controversial matter. He was cocksure of this and of that, upon twenty subjects where men of an analytical power infinitely superior had, in the vast intellectual expansion of these latter years, been content to doubt or to criticise.

He was, in a word, what he would have called "sound." He was "sound" upon Free Trade; he was "sound" upon the maintenance of the gold standard—a matter upon which he could know absolutely nothing. He was "sound" in his contempt for "foreigners"—in which category he was pleased to include what he denominated "Yankees." He loved England—but what he loved was the soil, the air, the habit; not that great vision we possess. He clipped his words in a manner so heartily unconscious and offensive that, for all his great wealth, the entry into a rank above that of his birth would have been denied him. He did not attempt it.

To strangers he would come out with a great roaring "sir," at the end of every other sentence. His conversations began with remarks upon the weather (commonly in condemnation of it) and would, I regret to say, not infre-

COMPETITION! SIR; COMPETITION!"

quently terminate with an oath, as he expressed his difference from the more modern views of his companion. He would often follow up such an expletive by uttering the undoubted truth "that that was all *he* knew about it," or that "it was all *he* had to say."

By some accident, probably of party tradition, he had followed Mr Gladstone in his policy of Home Rule for Ireland; but nothing save an inexcusable mulishness had made him continue to defend that worn-out error when all his friends had abandoned it.

It is not remarkable that, with such a character, he should have found himself totally out of sympathy with the principal economic trend of our time, and should have boldly refused to amalgamate the Abbott Line with any combination of shipowners. I can almost see him as I write, sitting at the table at the Palmerston, where he lunched, and shouting: "Competition, sir, competition!" at the unhappy Zachary K. Peabody, the agent of the African Steamship Trust, whose refinement he was too coarse to perceive, and whose practical experience of commerce he derided.

His features were, in their outline, projecting and masculine; his eyes firm, his chin solid. His hair, which was always in disorder, was of a sharp iron-grey, and two little whiskers,

nearly white, emphasised the squareness of his face. But the strength of his mouth was weakened by a perpetual tendency to laughter, and what he would have called "good-fellowship," or, as I have heard it named, "Row."

Many things had combined to give him his influence over Mr Burden. They had been young men together in the days when a common label of so-called Liberalism, the necessity for political effort, was sufficient to mask many essential differences of character between men. The greater vigour and more sanguine temperament of the shipowner had naturally over-borne the sobriety and occasional hesitation of the dealer in hardware. It must also be admitted, that in many of the small affairs of life—a narrow life, remember, and one whose horizon was easily surveyed—his judgment had rarely been at fault. It was he who had introduced Mr Burden to the trade in the M'Korio, and who would willingly—for as such crude natures often are, he was capable of affection—have gone to any sacrifice to preserve his friend from commercial or personal dishonour.

He was unmarried.

As for his judgment upon any of the great complexities of modern life, no worse judge could have been discovered than this utterly

simple, obstinate, loud-voiced man. His judgment upon such an adventure as Mr Barnett's could hardly for a moment be in doubt. Mr Burden had felt it instinctively, and, for all these weeks, had carefully avoided that familiar room. Now at last he entered; but the very sight of Mr Abbott's face roused in him a kind of warning that a severe difference of opinion might arise.

It will not surprise my readers to be told that Mr Abbott's greeting was emphatic and commonplace, full of "eh's?" and "Lord love me's," and "all this long time's"; but there lay in it a kind of hint that Mr Abbott knew well enough the cause which had so prolonged that interval.

Natural as was hesitation to such a man upon such a subject, Mr Burden looking first in his friend's eyes, and then away from them to a vile oil painting of the *Arethusa*, said:

"Abbott, I have come to ask your advice upon a matter . . . or perhaps I should say, I want to hear what you think of a matter . . ."

Mr Abbott replied that Mr Burden might "ask away," and "whatever you're going to do," he continued, with a facile joviality, "take my advice and don't." He laughed boisterously, as is the fashion of such men, at his own wit, blew his nose in a resounding way,

took out a pipe, filled it with an astonishing black tobacco, lit it and said :

" Fire it out, my lad. Out with her!"

It was some time since Mr Burden had suffered this kind of approach ; and it cannot be denied that he was more than a little nettled. Perhaps he showed it in his tone. At anyrate he said shortly enough :

" I have come to ask you what you think of the M'Korio ?"

" It stinks," said Mr Abbott, decisively.

He shut his mouth upon the words like a gin ; put his hands firmly upon the desk, as does a man upon a rudder bar, and looked up at Mr Burden.

" Whole country stinks. You've known places that stink. Barking Level stinks. Out *there*, by God, the whole place stinks. Big as Yorkshire — I've been there, mind you, and you haven't. Not a square yard but stinks !"

Indeed, Mr Abbott, in company with many who declaim against the corruption of our public life, would have done well to consider whether his language was not a greater offence against true morality than the actions and motives which he so recklessly ascribed to others.

" I came for advice, Abbott : not for abuse," said Mr Burden.

He was thoroughly annoyed, and the whole purpose of his visit receded from him. He was annoyed by the self-satisfaction of his friend's tone, by the excessive coarseness of his language, though it came from lips to which, I fear, coarseness was habitual. And he was, above all, annoyed to have thrust into the delicacy of his slight scruples this roaring objurgation.

"Who's abusing you, man alive?" said Mr Abbott, in his great loud voice, staring in harmony with his tone.

Mr Burden, crossing his arms, and tapping the oilcloth with his left foot, answered, with quiet dignity, that Mr Abbott's words implied an insult to his friends, to himself, and he might add, to the Empire.

Mr Abbott's only reply was to draw his forefinger rapidly across his nose—a gesture to which he was most unfortunately addicted—to clench his fist, and to strike the table before him.

"The Empire?" said Mr Abbott, much as a man might say, "the giant Blunderbore?" Then he continued, more quietly: "Burden, you're going mad."

"Yes, the Empire," said Mr Burden with some heat, and with more decision than he had yet shown. "I came for advice, Abbott,

and, upon my soul, I think I'm more fit to give it you than you are to give it me."

He had the firmness now to look Mr Abbott straight in the eye, and doing so, he said in a voice that was almost equally firm:

"Perhaps you do not know that they have found gold?"

"GOLD!" roared, bellowed, thundered Mr Abbott. He blew out a great breath, and whispered at the end of it: "Oh Lord in heaven!"

Mr Burden could bear no more.

He got up and said: "I'm sorry for this, Abbott, but I don't think that either you or I will profit by continuing the scene."

Mr Abbott rose at the same time from his big wooden chair.

"You may go if you like, Burden," he said, wagging his forefinger, and staring into his friend's face, as is the fashion of insolent men; "you may go if you like . . . but don't blame me if they knock you! They're a lot of —— scoundrels, and if you have anything to do with them you're a —— fool . . . and remember I said so. Don't blame me if they knock you!"

"I blame you for nothing but your expressions, Abbott," said Mr Burden.

His legs were trembling beneath him with

emotion; he repressed it, and walked slowly to the door, which he was careful to shut behind him with courteous ease.

When he was gone Mr Abbott, whose mind was closed to all save the most immediate things, stared at the door a moment, first blankly, then a little sadly. At last he gave an enormous cough, followed by a laugh yet more enormous, and within ten minutes had forgotten the scene in the intricacies of a policy.

. . . . . .

But Mr Burden was thoroughly disturbed. He was the more hurt at his friend's outburst, because at heart he had been on the defensive. Had Mr Abbott shown less violence, the advice—which he had rejected—would perhaps have sunk less deeply into his mind. As it was, the effect of the quarrel was this: that the wild words of Mr Abbott, the groundless insinuations which were those (at the best) of a fanatic, did more than the closest reason could have done. They took root in his heart, and bore a fruit of suspicion which never left him night or day.

He dined in the evening in town, alone, at an hotel—a thing he had not done for perhaps ten years. He purposely remained in that hotel for many hours, that he might be alone when he should reach home, and that he might

sleep before the very name M'Korio should reach his ears again. He took the 11.2, and did not reach his station till twenty minutes to twelve. It was close upon midnight when he unlocked the door of Avonmore.

He saw lights and heard voices; he came into the smoking-room whence they proceeded, and saw at the fire the profile of Cosmo, a little table with glasses, syphons and a whisky bottle, and beyond them, in his own deep padded chair, a cranium and a back which were most certainly those of Mr Barnett: of Mr Barnett in repose.

## CHAPTER IX

MR BARNETT did not rise.

He held between his hands such "teeming destinies," he controlled in the pursuit of his high mission so many various men, that his life necessarily suffered from the tension of artificial effort.

He was the more inclined to relax upon those occasions when he felt himself in the presence of friends who were bound to him by ties of gratitude. That evening in Norwood such a temptation was enhanced by the influence of a cosy room, soda water, spirits, a deeply padded chair, two magazines, Scotch whisky, and all the atmosphere of refinement.

He relaxed, I say, and a more truly lovable, because a more real Mr Barnett shone outwards through the surface of the man : a Mr Barnett not anxious for his accent or any other thing ; a Mr Barnett interior, domestic, and at ease.

In such a mood he saw no need to rise ; but his courtesy did not forsake him, nor the inbred habit of a man of the world. He lifted himself

some inches from the chair by a pressure of his left hand and stretched out his right towards the owner of the house.

The high cosmopolitan sphere in which Mr Barnett had been formed is naturally indifferent, as our eager English gentry also are, to the conventions of the suburbs ; but my readers will already have learnt that nothing could offend Mr Burden more than a breach of the usages of Norwood.

Mr Barnett's attitude was at first incredible to him : to this incredulity succeeded a burst of anger.

The late hour, the recent quarrel with his oldest friend, and, doubtless, the approach of illness, might have betrayed Mr Burden into an irrevocable step. He might have left the room without speaking. He might even, so thoroughly was he put out, have manœuvred for his guest's departure by that process of persistent, patient pressure which is called "kicking a man out of one's house." He might have sworn—had not Cosmo, with an excellent comprehension of his father's petty vagaries, saved the position.

For Cosmo stepped out to greet his father warmly ; he congratulated him heartily on having been able to return in time ; he told the flurried merchant how long and anxiously

the financier had waited ; with the pardonable exaggeration of filial care, he ante-dated Mr Barnett's advent and his own by a little over three hours ; he insinuated in every tone that nothing but the overwhelming importance of his father's judgment could have led Mr Barnett to so great an effort.

Mr Burden was but partially appeased ; he sat down in a stiff chair, not his own, and faced Mr Barnett sternly as one might a witness in a court ; the Leader of Men returned his gaze with a beam of comatose good nature. His head leaned slightly to the right, his upper eyelids (which were double, as are those of the great Andean bird) dropped deeply down, but from the little slit of prominent eye beneath a liquid humour still gleamed. That humour played upon Mr Burden steadily for some forty seconds, and then the voice spoke.

"I am ver' happy to zee you, Mr Burten."

A doubt, a disgusting suspicion, ran through Mr Burden's mind ; it leapt into a formed phrase ; he felt the words coming—but it never reached his lips. He controlled himself during the pause that followed, and, during that pause, it was most evident that Mr Barnett's vast organising mind was plunging deeper and deeper into the baths of silence and recuperation.

When he spoke next, it was with eyes quite

shut, and head bending forward irregularly at intervals.

"About that fellow Âppot?" he said.

Mr Burden did not answer.

"That fellow Âppott." Mr Barnett's big head wagged slowly in disapproval, "he is obstinate—but he is O.K. Alright. Aha? Not so?" Mr Barnet groped with his right hand as though to lay it upon Mr Burden's knee; but, finding in the way the arm of the deep chair on which he sat, he patted that affectionately instead, and closed his eyes again, and was silent.

The younger and more active, though lesser, mind of Cosmo, came to the aid of Mr Barnett, whom fatigue, coupled with his remaining difficulties in the English tongue, had led into some vagueness of expression. Cosmo was the better fitted to speak, from the fact that Mr Barnett, earlier in the evening, when his mood had been for some reason more sprightly, had fully explained how and why Mr Abbott was necessary to the M'Korio.

"Father," said Cosmo, rapidly, "you know how very few men there are in London who know one subject; Mr Abbott really does know the Delta. That is the whole point. But I am not sure that Mr Barnett quite understands . . .

MR. BARNETT THOROUGHLY AT HOME

Mr Barnett smiled and grunted; he was following, but indistinctly.

"Of course you know the difficulty, and I suppose I know it too. It all comes from what is finest in his nature; but the suspicion is intolerable, father. And that is another reason why he ought to come in."

After this lucid sequence of ideas, Cosmo, who was standing with his hand on the table looking anxiously at his father across the lamplight, said, with real earnestness, "We *must* get him to come in."

Mr Barnett opened his eyes rather widely and suddenly, and said:

"Ah! Yes! He môst come in. That is so."

He nodded wisely; then, had not breeding forbidden him, he would have gone to sleep.

He fought against the temptation successfully, straightened himself a little in his chair, and pursued the attack upon Mr Burden in a manner the efficiency of which was only marred by his extreme drowsiness. There was in his manner that which should connote so high a respect for Mr Burden's powers as to permit of confidence. He leant forward heavily and pressed his thumb against the merchant's ribs, not as do lighter men and less consistent, with a jerk or dig, but with a continuous pressure such as one uses against an electric bell.

When he had done this, Mr Barnett said, with increasing wakefulness, and a kind of mock sadness in his voice:

"Sômetimes they do nôt come in. . . . No? . . . Then we . . ." And Mr Barnett made with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand a peculiar screwing motion, a gesture native to the conqueror; having done so, he concluded: "we môst use pres-sure," and, as he said these words, he got up and stood steadily upon his feet.

It was a thing remarkable and arresting to the eye to see the fumes of lethargy pass from that great mind as mist does from the face of a mountain at morning; by an effort of the will it had thrown off sleep and the blessing of repose. The power of concentration had returned with every word during the last five minutes; the accent had grown purer; the attention more decisive. Mr Barnett noted the hour, he noted the cast of Mr Burden's face in the shade of the light, and interpreted it to mean a comprehension of his scheme. He exaggerated, I believe, the intelligence of his host and colleague.

He took his hat from the table and put it firmly and ceremoniously upon his head, as was his custom before he left a room; he took up his cane, the top of which was of lead

covered with gold; he buttoned round him a great coat of fur, and, being so prepared, went out through the drawing-room into the hall. There, with great emphasis, he said good-night.

Cosmo not only opened the door for him, but leant his right hand upon his shoulder, to afford support to a man older and perhaps more infirm than himself. He so supporting him, they went down the drive together, to where, at the gate, stood the electric brougham, throwing great cones of light upon the thick air of the small hours: it was the first in London to bear upon its panels a small coat of arms.

As they went, Mr Barnett spoke twice. The first thing he said was: "You should have a drive up herein. So a carriage can come. There is no good if a carriage cannot come." When he had said this, some rapid process of thought led him to another topic, and he continued: "Your father is a very fônny man."

Cosmo although he had received so much wider a training than his father, retained a trace, perhaps hereditary, of those conventions which I have already condemned. He felt the colour come into his face; but the darkness screened him, and his knowledge of the world restored him his balance in a moment.

"He'll be all right," he said cheerfully. He opened the carriage door (not without the

thanks of his chief) and tenderly arranged a warm rug around Mr Barnett's knees. The young man in livery, hired for such purposes, stood by in somnolent respect. Then they bade each other good-night, and the last word Cosmo heard that evening as he turned back towards the house was the great and comforting word "Hôme," rolled out by Mr Burden to his servant in the accent of command.

When Cosmo had re-entered the house and approached, with great reluctance, the room whose atmosphere still seemed full of failure, he found that his father had gone to bed, and he was glad; for, like most men possessed of wisdom, he trusted half his fortunes to the influence of other men's sleep.

. . . . . .

If the effect of a misunderstanding or a quarrel were immediate, with what rapidity would not the tragedies of the world develop! With what certitude could one not foresee, and perhaps provide against, the climax of an evil fortune.

If things led on from logical step to step, what simple stories would crowd the world. Then indeed the epic and the lyrical, which we perpetually seek in fiction, would divert us in the common affairs of our own lives.

But the real world around us, the world one

corner of which it is here my business to describe, is not arranged in that fashion. A crime, a miscalculation, will produce consequences, not immediate but ultimate. Suspicions confirmed, quarrels brought perhaps to the point of violence, seem rather to sink into the mind and to make a soil there, than to bear their full fruit at once; so that, when the catastrophe falls, it is commonly at an insignificant and nearly always at an unsuspected moment.

So it was with what I can only call the tragedy of my friend.

It was inevitable that when his even, narrow, and placid mind should finally come face to face with the broad and rugged power of Mr Barnett, sharp pain, and possibly misfortune, should follow from such a meeting. The unhappy accident of the visit to Mr Abbott, and of a couple of hours delay, had brought those two minds in the presence one of the other; and a very grave hour had passed. But so are men made, that this experience led to nothing at the time. A night's long sleep, the activities of the following day, sufficed to blur the image. Is it not Seneca who tells us that our own judgment is qualified by the expressed judgment of others? The public character of Mr Barnett recovered its place in Mr Burden's mind. Many days at his business, a sudden

change in the weather, a small but lucky investment, a very active quarrel with his cook, who demanded and received instant dismissal —these good and evil things soon put the misfortune of Mr Barnett's visit into its true perspective. It produced no visible, certainly no deplorable, result; what it did do was to leave Mr Burden all ready for further irritation, and for a growing misconception of his surroundings, until at last the great misfortune fell, after apparently the most trivial of accidents. The heart of his confidence had been eaten out; it held by the outer shell alone, and a touch was enough to make it crumble. But, for the moment, his faith held firm.

Moreover, if Mr Burden had been inclined to let the incident weigh upon him Cosmo's efforts alone would have dispersed such an inclination. He returned home quite regularly day after day; he entertained his father with a thousand things. It was not till a week had passed that he permitted so much as a letter concerning the affairs of the Company to come under the old man's eyes. When such a letter did arrive, he had carefully provided that it should be a short note of congratulation from a country gentleman, a distant acquaintance, a man of great possessions, wholly ignorant of the Delta and of most other things; one that

hoped, if all went well, to be a shareholder, and who very warmly said so in his letter to Norwood.

At intervals of several days business details, of no great importance, but such as gradually reawakened in Mr Burden the old interest, began to come to his table; later he dined with Mr Harbury and met a very charming American actress, the manager of the Banque des Pyrénées, Lord John Mackintosh and his wife, and Lothingbury Grail, a gentleman who had written verses. They talked of Art.

A week later Cosmo and he lunched with Lord Benthorpe at Cosmo's club, and the very next day, walking in the best of moods towards the City, they met by accident Mr Barnett himself, fresh with the morning, and in the most sympathetic of moods.

And all this while around Mr Burden, in the papers, in the conversation of men, the M'Korio grew and grew. The season continued, the debates in Parliament languished, the heat increased, and the spirit of the great African River ran through the veins of London.

The prospectus was drafted: many little inconclusive conversations were held; in a word, by all those small preliminaries which are necessary to a great and worthy enterprise, Mr Burden was re-introduced to the routine

he knew. His active interest returned. But deeper down the pall lay over his mind, and could not be lifted.

The struggle between these two things, his fatal lack of comprehension, his eager and patriotic pride, has been hitherto the matter of my record. Alas! the victory of the former must now lead on to my conclusion!

. . . . . .

Mr Burden permitted his colleagues to undertake the necessary details, and he was even glad that they should look after such wearisome business. The registration of the Company, the finding of Brokers for it, and of Bankers, and of Solicitors, would have interfered with what he honestly believed to be his own engrossing labours in connection with his trade.

He was profoundly thankful that no further word was spoken of Mr Abbott; but it was the thankfulness of respite, not of reprieve. He saw before him an inevitable day, and he dreaded it. He consoled himself with guesses; he tried to forget that his great friendship had turned into an instrument—an instrument which could wound as well as work for him.

Eddies of uncertainty swirled in his mind. The Bankers were as firm as the Bank of England, the Brokers were of immense respectability, the very name of the Solicitors

seemed like a part of the Constitution; but all these things did but increase his disease—they seemed to him to be at the same time England, and not England. It was as though a man should be given a picture framed in a solid familiar frame—a frame suited to hold the portrait of his father—and hung before his table; and as though, in such a setting, the picture within constantly shifted and changed, now terrifying, now evil, now grotesque, now merely irritant, but always a night-mare of discord. In this mood a critical day found him—the day when his presence in the new offices was demanded to hear the prospectus read, and to pass it finally for printing.

The new offices were in Broad Street. Their position I have described in an earlier part of this book; with their magnificence perhaps most of my readers are acquainted. I have but to recall the two plaster lions that guard the staircase, symbolising, it is believed, the majesty of our race; the splendid negro, in Vienna ware of life-size, holding the lamp in the central gallery, and clothed as to his middle with a belt of ostrich feathers—whose ring of white against the shining darkness of his skin naturally led on to the row of smiling teeth above and the very conspicuous eyes. This masterpiece, which Mr Barnett had accepted

long ago in lieu of payment of a debt, was already familiar to London—little reproductions of it were to be seen in the shops of the West End—the symbols of the M'Korio. The interiors were worthy of such apparatus. The doors of the main rooms were of oak; the door-plates and the locks were Marie Antoinette bronze gilding, embossed, single and reversible. It was a matter of pride to the Promoters that no two were exactly alike. A large male black cat, bearing round its neck a silver collar, added the note of domesticity, and was already familiar to Britain through the personal paragraphs of the daily press. The whole was rendered complete by a porter, than whom nothing more splendid could serve a sovereign in arms, whether in London or Berlin.

This man was a Swedish Protestant; in height he was fully six feet seven, his hair was of the colour of tow, his eyes were of a faded blue, his face was white and yellow; in intellect, while not deficient, he was of a deliberation which admirably suited the nature of his employment; nor could any length of hours passed in the public gaze at the Main Entrance weary the Northern steadfastness of his mind. Proud of his uniform, content with his wages, enormous in his manner as in his dimensions, he was a further and a crowning

THE PORTER OF THE M'KORIO'S DELTA DEVELOPMENT CO.
(FROM A GROUP)

proof of Mr Barnett's instinct for what those adjuncts are, which cheer on to success the energies of an Imperial race.

I would I had the space or leisure to deal at further length with this remarkable and simple figure; indeed, long before Mr Burden's death, it was my intention to devote to the portrayal of this porter's life and character that literary skill which has now been turned into another, a far graver, and I fear a more monotonous channel. I had intended to relate exactly his career. How, stranded in the docks of London, this towering Scandinavian had obtained employment as a Life-guard; how, deserting from his Corps on account of the bullying to which he was subjected by his comrades, he found his way into the Metropolitan Police. Dismissed from this force for drunkenness, he became a chucker-out in a Music Hall, in which post his grievous muscular weakness, universal in men of his type, soon proved him unfit to deal with that athletic youth which frequents such haunts in the hey-day of its vigour; how, finally, while posing as a giant in a Fair, a position he occupied in return for his bare food, he was tempted to break his contract at the prospect of a higher wage. At the persuasion of Mr Barnett himself, he fled by night, accepted the service and livery of the

M'Korio, and so reached the culmination of his career.

His interesting personality has detained my pen too long, I must return to Mr Burden entering the Great Room, where he should find his colleagues on the day when the Prospectus in its final form was to be passed for Press.

. . . . . .

Mr Burden had played a great part in the world. He had been Sheriff in the early eighties; he had been Treasurer to the Bowmakers' Company, and had drawn up in that capacity the scheme for endowing a new Chair of Comparative Religion at Dublin, a city sadly in need of broadening its outlook upon God; he had been called as an honoured witness before many Royal Commissions, and had sat on the Committee for the Adjustment of Port Dues; he had even enjoyed, now for some years, the honourable title of Justice of the Peace; and on the occasion of the Mansion House dinner, but eight months before, he had sat between the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the moment and some other member of the Cabinet whose name I cannot recall.

He was therefore not unfamiliar with the honourable pomp wherewith we surround the conduct of Empire; he was accustomed to the

scenes and the personalities which accompany the furtherance of our Fate.

As he had entered daily deeper and deeper into the machinery by which that fate is advanced, its complexity had overwhelmed his simple mind.

I have sufficiently described the vortex of conflicting moods into which his soul had been drawn; yet must that whirlpool continually appear in this short story of his end, for without some sympathy with his grievous torment a view quite false to his nature might be conveyed. He could not comprehend.

It must be so. The past and the name of such men are necessary to the grist of expansion; but expansion and the newer kind of responsibilities kill them. So doubtless Venice in the sixteenth, Spain in the seventeenth, Holland in the eighteenth centuries were compelled to use, and destroy in using, what had been their most national type. It was the price they paid for the varied glory they proceeded to achieve. My friend was a necessary sacrifice, I know; but he was my friend. The victim moves me.

Consider him here in this great modern room —how much it was a torture-place for him.

He and they were ending their work. That day the last stone would be laid; yet was he further than ever from repose.

He and the three other men before him were now occupied in the actual work of forging a

new province. The dignity of such an occasion should have touched him (he thought) more profoundly than it could his colleagues, whose lives had been spent in no other atmosphere. But, alas! unrest, most cogent, most bewildering, robbed that great occasion of any note of the solemn. Reality and unreality mixed in his mind continually. The world, so long a quite familiar thing, grew unfamiliar to him, more and more with every hour. The constraint which he felt in Mr Barnett's presence; the certitude he had that Mr Barnett was a genius and a maker of England; the natural awe wherewith he regarded Lord Benthorpe's experience; the astonishing phenomenon whereby Lord Benthorpe nevertheless showed himself purely passive; Harbury's manifestly clear and decisive intelligence, coupled with his complete subservience — all these contradictions put his mind into a whirl.

Full of an aged complaint, not very distant from despair, he sat him down wearily in the vacant chair set for him. It was of the kind known to the trade as "Dutch Mediæval Easy"; fashioned of American hickory so treated as to resemble old English oak, and handsomely upholstered in a green imitation of Spanish leather.

He noticed Mr Harbury's quiet, impressive

face; Lord Benthorpe's somewhat nervous ease; above all, Mr Barnett's powerful ill-dressed figure, sitting at random, bent over the scattered papers before him; and in his heart he groaned, remembering his fortune risked, the friendship of his life in jeopardy, and his hopeless see-saw of misunderstanding.

As usual, it was Mr Harbury who spoke first; as usual, he spoke rapidly and clearly.

"I think, gentlemen," he said, "there is very little for us to do . . . Payleys will bank for us, as you know. Charles & Charles will naturally do our legal work. The Directors I think we know." He smiled as he said this, a slight conventional smile which fluttered on the face of Lord Benthorpe, and died on that of Mr Burden. "All we have to do is to read over the prospectus for the last time." He sighed, and there was a pause. Then he turned to Mr Burden, saying: "Perhaps Mr Burden can suggest something."

Mr Burden frowned solemnly. How often at his breakfast-table, when he opened his morning's letters, had he not come upon such documents, prospectuses—the bricks and stones of Dominion? How often had he not held them before him, judging them steadily through his spectacles of gold? How rarely had he been misled by the false; how rarely had he despised the true? His investments had not

been many. The expansion of his business had absorbed the greater part of his savings. But such ventures as he had made were safe enough. He could remember but one that had failed, and that was through no fault of his own judgment, or of that of his directorate. It was the Foreign Office which, as usual, had failed to put its foot down, and had permitted the ruffianly Alemammi of Yollabù to repudiate his most solemn engagements. On all these things Mr Burden pondered in a confused silence; then he said, in that measured tone which marks the man of affairs:

"I can remember nothing that needs alteration, Mr Harbury; nothing material."

Mr Harbury suggested that they should read the draft of the prospectus immediately, and that if anything occurred to any of them for the last time he should mention it.

Mr Harbury had not got very far into the body of the work when Lord Benthorpe stopped him at the word "exploitation." It seemed to him a foreign word, and it had a flavour of something grasping and unjust about it. He hoped that no atmosphere of that kind would mar the effect of the prospectus.

Mr Harbury was evidently interested, and asked Mr Burden's opinion. Mr Burden, who had been lost in thought, gazing at the great map of the M'Korio Delta that hung on the

wall, patched with yellow for gold and with grey for coal, looked round somewhat flurried, and said that he had nothing to say.

Lord Benthorpe suggested the word "development," but Mr Harbury pointed out that the word already occurred at the head of the sheet in the phrase "M'Korio Delta Development Company."

Lord Benthorpe murmured:

"True, true."

After about ten minutes of discussion, the word "exploitation" was allowed to stand.

. . . . . .

Such are the limits of a modern book, that it is impossible for me to give at full length every remark that was made during this historic meeting. I abandon the attempt with reluctance. So many subtle shades of meaning were thrashed out between these four men; so powerfully did their various characters come into play; so many aspects of the forces that build up new colonies appeared in them, that the subject possesses an irresistible fascination to the writer, and perhaps to the reader of this chronicle. It is a fascination which they must resist: each in his own sphere.

Briefly, then, to mention only the more important matters, the word "but" in the fifth line was changed to "and"; the Anglo-Saxon word "employee" was substituted for the

printer's "employé"; and (a very striking example of Mr Barnett's grasp of the public pulse), the word "lagoon" (though it had become familiar to the Island race in the last two months) was changed to "lake."

The whole discussion did not absorb more than an hour and a half of their time; and, at the close of it, Mr Barnett rang for a servant. He was that man of magnificence whom we have seen: a giant amenable and of service, he brought in wine and sandwiches upon a tray. The four men ate and drank, relaxing for a moment their attention to business, and touching upon lighter things. Three-quarters of an hour was all that Mr Barnett allowed for this pleasant interval: he rang again, and their discussion was resumed. They went carefully over all the points which had previously been decided, deleted a comma after the words "brightest gem," and put a full stop after "in the British crown."

At last, as the afternoon was drawing on, one or the other would rise at intervals, stroll to the window with his hands in his pockets and gaze out, or saunter to the fireplace, and lean upon the mantel-piece looking into the glass above it. Conversation of a more general kind occasionally relieved the strain and tension of their great task. Lord Benthorpe had quite an interesting argument with Mr Harbury

upon the value of the inter-colonial postal system, and Mr Burden slept, for perhaps five or six minutes, towards the close of the afternoon.

By four o'clock, however, there remained nothing to decide, and Mr Barnett suggested that he himself should read over the prospectus for the last time, that they might have a final opportunity of touching upon any matters that had not hitherto occurred to them.

. . . . . .

Outside in Broad Street, men passed and repassed, and most of them glanced up at that great window. There were many of the shrewdest, and many of the most solid, who envied the little group within; and even the great run of people, the crowd which turns the curving lane to a river through the middle hours of the day, felt the magic of what was passing behind those walls.

There were some random enthusiasts—vague, belated democrats from an earlier age—who were filled with sudden anger as they considered invincible powers of evil forging, in that room above, the chains which were to bind a new country. To these the names of Benthorpe and Burden were the names of implacable fiends; oppressors of humanity, but oppressors of such more than human genius, that humanity could do nothing against their power.

On the top of a passing omnibus a father of the name of Bailey, said to his son, who sat beside him :

"You see that window? Those are the M'Korio offices."

He wagged his head wisely and said :

"It's a big thing," and the expression upon his face was at once illuminate and reverent ; that of a familiar but devoted worshipper at the shrine of some god. The boy, careless as all boys are of all religions, said, "Oh," and the 'bus rolled on.

Even the policemen and other poor men, who might have no share in these high things, felt the awe of what was toward. The hawkers and the newspaper boys, members of a rank where finance is forgotten, yet remembered England, and felt a pride of their own in the venture upon which these four men had entered ; nor is there to-day any great city in the world, save London, where every citizen can forget envy and the differences of wealth in the passion of patriotism.

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Meanwhile Mr Barnett, within, was reading the prospectus for the last, and, if I remember rightly, the fifth time.

He held the paper down on the table by the weight of his large left hand, and read it through most carefully ; the volume of his voice

was emphasised by the slight guttural accent and the broad vowels which alone betrayed his foreign experience.

It was a peculiarity of his—common to most men of dominant character—that he suffered no interruption: a chance remark from Mr Harbury, an interjection from Lord Benthorpe passed by totally unheeded. His voice, slowly proceeding from word to word, or jolting at the stops, went steadily over the other men's remarks, and crushed them as a great stone roller crushes clods in its going. It had also this in common with the roller, that its pace was even. He emphasised no syllables; every letter—contrary to our modern English usage—was pronounced; and this, in words such as "undesirability," "advantageous," or "irrecognisable" produced an effect both rich and strange.

When he had finished reading, he smoothed the papers out, gathered them up, and sighed as over a thing completed. He rose, and the three others with him; and you may say that one of the greatest days in the recent history of our country had gloriously ended.

"Not once or twice," as someone says somewhere, "in our rough island story, the path of duty was the road to glory."

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## CHAPTER X

THERE runs a mandate to chosen nations to govern upon earth as vicegerents of the Divine. It has fallen upon peoples so separated by time and customs that its essential unity is with difficulty perceived ; nevertheless, that unity is assured. The process whereby dominion is achieved is called by different names : the names, and not the events, deceive us ; the names alone produce a false atmosphere of change. First, perhaps, it was the vague loyalty to the tribe, the marauding foray, the settlement ; next the intense love of a city and of its gods, the successful defence, the advance, the conquest and organisation of lands beyond the boundary. Karl Unterwassen reverses the order ; it is a point of small importance.

To-day the registration of the Company, the lease of offices, the prospectus, the flotation are the progressive revelations of such a mandate. Of all these allotment is the Crown.

The M'Korio Delta Development Company opened its lists on the 9th of July. By four o'clock of the 10th those lists were closed and

the capital had been subscribed; it is not known how many times over.

With the next day the allotment began.

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Those of my fellow citizens who have been engaged in the active work of Empire building, will know what I mean when I say that allotment is among the hardest tasks which our country demands of us. Those who have not been thus actively engaged in the expansion of our civilisation ("they also serve who only stand and wait") must take it for granted.

Consider the care and judgment to be exercised! Not to disappoint what is influential or what is strong: not to alienate the mass of small subscribers—for the mass of small subscribers is Public Opinion. Not to offend the proprietor of a great newspaper. Yet also, not to offend the manager, the editor—sometimes the papermaker. To consider the claims which good birth and a long tradition of government will give to this man, a genius for affairs to that. To remember (and sometimes it is only remembered at the last moment) that such and such a name—almost passsed over in its insignificance—stands for another much greater name. To recollect the power of this subscriber with men of his own religion, of this other with men who cultivate honesty,

of a third with those who admire the capacity for intrigue. Monarchy must be remembered: it is a permanent feature in our English life. The army must be remembered. Politicians, some of whose names the public will ignore, must yet be accurately gauged. Their power as managers and leaders must be estimated. Even the foreigner must have his place, and must be known. The foreign sovereign, the foreign negotiator, may help to wreck or to make the thing. He may be turned from the ally to the enemy of our beloved country by one involuntary error.

It is a task, I say, of awful responsibility, and one in which a man may do more in a few moments to advance or retard the designs of Providence than in any other of the modern world.

The work went on. Three hours of it, four hours, sometimes five. On the second day Mr Burden nearly broke down, Lord Benthorpe was actually absent for two days running, fallen ill from sheer fatigue. It told even upon Mr Harbury. He got black patches under his eyes, and he walked, a new thing for him, with some fatigue. Mr Barnett alone seemed to be actually refreshed by the closeness of application that was necessary.

The public outside grumbled; nothing could

be done till the allotment was declared. They would have grumbled less had they seen the grinding work of those ten days. Every morning the mass of letters was sorted, the list of names drawn up, and with strict commercial probity every single application passed before each of the directors.

On the fifth day Mr Burden's head was lost, and Lord Benthorpe's assent had become mechanical. Mr Barnett, on the contrary, became more and more eager, more and more exact as the work proceeded. Before the close of the sixth day, his brain alone was sitting in judgment over that mass of papers; it was fortunate, for on the remaining four days the most delicate part of the work remained to be done. There did indeed pass by Mr Burden one or two incongruous things that troubled him. Canon Cone had sent no cheque. Mr Barnett would make himself responsible for that. Major Pondo, whom Mr Burden had always regarded as a poor, adventurous man, applied for fifteen thousand shares. The secretary of that politician who had most consistently denounced the financial side of our colonial expansion applied for ten thousand.

There were perhaps a dozen incidents of this sort which Mr Burden could not fit in with what he had known of the world. But the

work was too pressing and too exacting to leave energy for comment, or even for hesitation. All these discrepancies made upon Mr Burden's mind only one general and blurred effect: to wit, that his own judgment was doubtful, and that society around him was more complex, and perhaps more perilous, than he had imagined.

On the 19th the allotment was declared. On the morning of the 21st, though no sales had taken place, the anxious informal bidding, which went on in the house, and afterwards in the street, and even privately between individuals (rigorously as etiquette forbids such things) was offering two and one-sixteenth, two and one-eighth, two and a quarter before evening. The prices began to be talked of, and the selling to be regular within three days; and the price then was over four. The shares rose with the steady movement of a balloon, up on an accelerating curve; "M. D. D.'s." changing hands with such rapidity, that it was no longer possible to come to any conclusion with regard to the individual motives of the more important buyers and sellers. The pace was the pace of a crusade. As religions take men or the enthusiasms of war, so the public had come to believe in themselves and the M'Korio; in what they could *do* with the new

province. They saw the Delta already drained, already mined—as it will be mined and drained —they saw that the nominal capital of this new company was the petty ransom of a great kingdom in the future of England. By Wednesday, the 26th, the shares were at seven.

It is the most fruitful and the most beneficent of exaltations. It bridges the ford, as Kipling has so finely said; it imposes law; it is creating a new and happy world from the west of Ireland to Pùtti-Ghâl. There is something awful and mysterious about it. As it sweeps by, this missionary creed, this determination and confidence of a whole people, a plain man's spirit feeling it comes very near to the Hosts of the Lord. On Monday the 31st, the shares were at eight and a quarter, and there they stopped, up, poised upon a summit, as genius poises upon the columns of conquerors: hovering in bronze.

It is not in humanity—even in ours—to bear these moods for ever undisturbed. Some moments of doubt, but not of despair—perhaps it is juster to say some moments of repose will overtake the temper of the firmest race. On Tuesday, the 1st of September, the shares were at six and three-quarters. On Thursday, the 3rd, they were a fraction below five. But something rallied in the soul of

England; the country clergy read in the *Standard* of Saturday morning with something of the throb a trumpet peal evokes, that M.D.D.'s had gone 'way up over seven at the close of the yesterday's market.

By what avenue shall I approach the analysis of that vast agglomeration of sub-conscious national forces? Any single method seems crude and petty in the presence of such a complex and Overpowering Whole . . . perhaps it is most reasonable to follow the fortunes of one block of shares. For, when great states are fermenting towards ripeness, men are but atoms whirled hither and thither. Economic necessities drive them, and these necessities in their turn are but the expression of some historic will. . . . Yes, it is better to follow the fortunes of a block of shares than of an individual shareholder: for men pass, but the Company remains. . . .

I will consider the one thousand shares originally allotted to the first cousin of the Secretary for the Fine Arts.

He became the possessor of these upon the 19th, and had paid for them £250; £250 more to be paid (as the prospectus directed) in three months, and the remainder when called for. These were but a part of his holding; but I am dealing with this one block of

shares for the sake of example. On the 23rd, I find them bought at the price of three and a quarter by the Bishop of Ballycannon. On the 26th, his lordship sells them at seven to young Lord Berpham, who had been advised by his solicitor that they were a good thing: sincere advice, for his solicitor was also his creditor and trustee. On the 31st, when they touched eight and a quarter, Lord Berpham should have sold, but that young disdainful spirit was too noble. He was too noble. Had he sold, he would have realised no less a sum than £8250 (less brokerage). He was too noble. The blood in him was confident of England, and he held on for a rise. My readers know what followed. The next day they had fallen to six and three quarters. On Thursday, most reluctantly, by the advice, not to say the pressure, of his solicitors, the young man sold at four and seven-eighths, having lost no less a sum than £2100, which he could ill afford. The buyer was Mr Zimmer, the broker, but as I find that Mr Barnett himself acquired them in the same afternoon, I have no doubt that he was the bona fide purchaser; my certitude becomes the more fixed when I find that on Saturday morning, the 5th of September (the shares having then touched seven and a half), Mr Barnett disposed of them

to Henry Bowling, the well-known trainer and proprietor of *English Racing*. He, in his turn, sold them at the same price to Mrs Maidstone. who disposed of them a fortnight later at the same price to her sister-in-law, who sold them at a slight premium in the open market. I see them receding into the distance, passing through the hands of that fine old poet-patriot, Gaystone ; then, a wofully disintegrated, a mournful procession, as the winter wanes, they drift off into the middle classes, sink, and are engulfed.

But Mr Burden, he neither bought nor sold. He was astounded at these fluctuations, but more astounded at the permanently high level which M.D.D.'s maintained, in spite of the rough sea upon which they were tossed. Sudden fortunes sprang around him, sudden reputations startled and but half convinced his sober mind. Even that Major Pondo, whose face he thought he must have seen in dreams, was wealthy now, and met him with an easy air.

Then it was, after a month of so much violence, that the old man's inner spirit, no longer confused or troubled, leant towards its end, and was possessed by sadness continually.

One part of it, the strongest and the safest, the part that had so sanely judged his people and their politics for fifteen years, still dwindled.

That other, older part, was not so easily to be silenced, nor was so readily content. Here suspicions had hardened (vain imaginary suspicions without proof, born of a narrow knowledge and of an ignorance of modern things) till they became like thorns, piercing him. He began to notice every gesture, and the shifting of every eye. He would talk to Cosmo more than Cosmo wished. Once or twice he walked alone, and to no purpose, southward out of Norwood, until he could find the fields. Once, all night, he lay awake. There was no pain, but he met the next day in a spirit of awful tension, akin to madness. Once he refused, for the first time, an invitation to Mr Barnett's house.

In such a mood he wasted his last midsummer. In such a mood death, which needs all our preparation, found him not half prepared.

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To return to Mr Abbott.

His name had not been mentioned for days and weeks, partly, of course, because every guide in this adventure, from Cosmo to Mr Barnett, was determined to give as little pain as might be to Mr Burden, the oldest and weakest of their number; and partly also because the giving of that pain (in itself, after all, only an imaginary evil), might

result in the most practical of evils to the M'Korio.

Mr Abbott was best as a friend, nay, as a director; next best as an enemy; but worst of all, as one neither enemy nor friend, but contemptuous and perhaps influencing secretly a member of their own group. They knew all this, and July had ended without a word being said. Mr Abbott himself had neither spoken nor written; Mr Burden had not approached the offices of the shipmaster. Mr Barnett and Cosmo were both confident that he dreaded the road to that familiar room; they were confident he had not met his friend. Nor had he.

On the other hand, neither was the younger nor the older of these two active brains willing to temporise. It was not in their sound scheme of business to temporise, and the moment seemed to them, of all moments, the least fitting for delay.

Mr Abbott pressed.

The session was lagging to its end. Within a week or two the grouse would be whirring, and the chance would come for the transference of the M'Korio from the Government of the Foreign Office to that of the Colonial; the moment approached when a few men, undisturbed by the necessities or accidents of debate, could go right forward and do their

best for England. But if time was propitious, time also urged them. Soon the great editors would have left their offices, the heads of the great businesses would be abroad or in the provinces. I have already alluded to the grouse; but a very few weeks and the shadow of the partridge would appear between Mr Barnett and the best laid of his plans. Already multitudes of the middle class were asleep upon beaches of sand. Anxiety, a mood that cannot long disturb such minds, had begun to cast a wing over Mr Barnett's clear and creative intelligence.

The necessity for Mr Abbott was clamorous.

It was not only as a principal authority with men as ordinary as himself (and such men are often possessed of great influence or wealth; sometimes of a voice in Parliament); it was not only as a loud name, which the public had long connected with the M'Korio Delta, nor only as the owner of the Abbott Line, that Mr Abbott's support was demanded in Broad Street. There were a number of other considerations, each apparently of little importance, but forming in the aggregate a strand which men like Mr Barnett are the last to neglect.

Bowley depended more perhaps upon Abbott's general judgment of affairs than upon any other's man's: and Bowley con-

trolled the two groups of insurance which the M'Korio coast still had to reckon with.

A friendship, a trifle fantastic, was to be discovered between Abbott and the Permanent Under-secretary for Malarial Districts. That in itself might have been of little importance a month earlier; but, with Lord Malham at the Malarial Office, it made a difference; he had only been there three weeks (since the Postage Stamp scandal), he was shy and new to office and the Permanent Under-secretary was still the master of the show.

Mr Abbott's own paper, *The Keelson*, was not perhaps of very great influence in the City; but it was the oldest in the shipping-trade, and, though it certainly lost money, and could obtain but very few advertisements, it was read in every principal office in the provinces, and could only be boycotted at a very considerable expense in the London Press. Oddly enough, it had acquired an established reputation (for its opinions at least) in America and the Colonies, though its total circulation amounted to little more than two thousand copies. To you and me, and Cosmo, and Mr Barnett, and anyone who sees the world from the inside, the thing was a rag, the losing fad of a man more faddist than anyone in our faddist time. But when you are dealing with

an investing public of millions, such fads must be reckoned with: for they tell—men cannot all print but they can all talk, and the wild rags tell.

Abbott at lunch, two months before, had sworn "by this and by that" to go into the House of Commons. I will not repeat the coarseness of his phrase. The man was so happy-go-lucky, that his determination might mean nothing at all; but Mr Barnett knew, as well as anyone, that if Abbott should so choose there were perhaps five constituencies in which room would at once be made for him.

Lastly there was the fact of Abbott's resistance. Such resistance of itself demanded caution.

Therefore it was that, one morning, without so much as a note to announce him, Cosmo walked straight into that little office, where his father had suffered the chief pang of his life two months before.

. . . . . .

It was eleven o'clock of an August morning, and London was as hot as Rome. The energy had gone out of things; the streets were curiously silent; many of the offices deserted. Mr Abbott sat sweltering in a shirt and white breeches, which he had preserved from some Eastern travel. He thought it his business

to be there, and there he was; but no work could he or any other man do on such a day.

Cosmo, rigidly dressed, and with an extreme neatness, cool in the tropical weather, everything about him ordered, came in with a brief recognition. In the few months of his training, he had advanced years in the knowledge of conduct and of business, and was already manifesting the material of which the great successes are made. To almost any other man in London, he would have used the delicate art which a great scheme demands; but he knew his man too well to attempt any such art with Mr Abbott. Here and there, you will discover, even in the modern world, the man that must be driven. You will not always succeed in driving him; but there is only one method of approaching the business. There was exact determination and aim in every gesture of the young man: his vigour and directness were the more remarkable, in that until this moment he had never used such an attitude — save possibly to servants.

He sat down in a chair just opposite his father's friend. He put down his hat upon the table with a slight, hard rap; looked Mr Abbott steadily and strongly in the eyes (an effort so unusual as to cause him positive pain), and said:

"I think you know why I have come."

To such gross simplicity as the shipmaster's, all this was as yet nothing but an annoyance. He took the young man's hat off the table, reached out so as to hang it on the gas bracket behind him (whence it fell to the floor) and said "No." And, as he said it, a very unpleasing expression passed across his face.

Cosmo jumped up, picked his hat off the floor, brushed it with his arm, rapped it down upon the table again and said, with admirable self-restraint: "You know as well as I do why I have come."

"Let me put it up safely for you," said Mr Abbott, and he reached forward again for the hat. Cosmo withdrew it and held it in his right hand, and, even at that most incongruous moment, Mr Abbott could not refrain from laughter.

"You will have it," he said; and his amusement so far got the better of his temper, that Cosmo thought for one moment inwardly whether it would not be better to approach this coarse mind by another channel. But his training wisely persuaded him that the most direct of methods was the best. The method whereby men tame beasts; the masterly method of fear.

"I have come," he said, still keeping himself well in hand, "because matters cannot go on

much longer as they are doing now. He paused a moment to let the impression form; "It can't go on, Mr Abbott, and I have come to tell you so quite frankly. . . . Before I leave this room I mean the business to be settled. . . . It can't go on."

Mr Abbott rang a bell.

A young and rather nervous clerk came in, and gazed anxiously from one to the other, for Cosmo's face was unfamiliar to him, and there had been quarrels of late.

"Arthur," said Mr Abbott, "is it Friday or Monday that the *Patagonia* sails?"

Cosmo looked up with something like a scare on his face; he knew from his reading how often these irrelevant questions may be leading up to some great move.

"Monday, sir," said Arthur in a whisper.

"Then you can just have the box of cigars sent here," said Mr Abbott jovially; "I'll give 'em to Cap'n Gunn meself. I'd prefer to do that. Rather than he shouldn't have had 'em o' course I'd have sent 'em aboard. I thought someowrother she sailed to-morrow. As 'tis, why I'll give 'em to him myself. That's all right, Arthur."

Mr Abbott nodded and Arthur disappeared, relieved.

"I'm sorry, Cosmo," said Mr Abbott, lean-

ing familiarly across the table like a second-rate uncle, and wiping an enormous red handkerchief over his face; I'm sorry; these things aren't of much impoortance, but if one don't attend to 'em at a time, you know . . ."

I have had to praise Cosmo for many things in these pages, as I have had to blame him for a few; for nothing was he more worthy of praise than for his complete command of himself at this moment. The effort of the severe strain was hardly perceptible; certainly not to so brutish a nature as his opponent's.

"You were just saying, lad," said Mr Abbott, with increasing coarseness and kindliness, "how the thing couldn't go on. Well, I'm sorry for it. But you can sell out, ye know, and so can your poor old dad. Hasn't come to see me for weeks and weeks!" Mr Abbott shook his head. "You can sell out, you know. Of course, I dunno' how it'll look, mind ye, but you can run the risk that there won't be any trial; safe risk to run now-a-days."

Cosmo answered him in the clear measured voice of a man whose plan is exactly defined, and who is dealing with forces as irresponsible as those of nature.

"Mr Abbott," he said, "it is twenty-five minutes past eleven; if I do not know before

half-past that you are coming in, I shall go, and our plans will be made accordingly."

"And then the band played," answered Mr Abbott with exquisite vulgarity.

It was his theory (a theory which had so far controlled him in this exchange of views) that a man should never lose his temper. He gave way to passion as little as possible. Three times a week, perhaps, or five at the utmost. Upon this occasion he struggled with himself; in less than a moment came what is inevitable with men of Mr Abbott's hopeless type; he exploded.

"And then the band played," he repeated somewhat inconsequently, "and then the—! —! — ! band played!" With each repetition, his face got redder and redder, and his voice rose: not very loudly, but soughing as do the boughs of trees at the beginning of a storm.

"And then by—! the—! —! —! —! band played!!" (every adjective was varied). "Oh Lord" (striking the desk), "if you weren't his son! And if I hadn't—well known you ever since you were a little whining prig of a boy, I'd throw you out of this little window; I would! Out of this little — side window. This dirty little,—little—, —, side window. As it is, I'll do nothing more than throw you down the stairs!"

"AND THEN THE BAND PLAYED"

Towards the end of this extraordinary harangue, Mr Abbott's voice—huge in volume, rolling in tone, thunderously deep in note and menacing every species of violence in its mere sound—was shaking the walls of the old room; in the new, palatial offices without, clerks were cowering; though they were not unused to the echoes of such scenes.

Cosmo was standing up, he was very pale, and his voice was only just master of itself; but he did not give way. He stepped backward and felt, without looking round, for the handle of the door, as Mr Abbott rose gigantic from beyond the table. And Cosmo said, very rapidly, as a light gun retreating fires one last, sharp, angry shell:

"Then we will freeze you out."

With the last syllable of that final phrase he slammed the door, and rippled down the stairs into the street.

About three seconds after he had turned the nearest corner, there was a roaring and a storm on the landing he had passed; there was terror in all the floors above, great boots upon the stairs, and Mr Abbott, still in his shirt-sleeves, was at the private door, glaring up and down the street, half apoplectic in the heat, and fearful to the passers-by. He turned, still holding all his rage, clanked up the stairs

again, burst through the door of his little room and on into the splendid outer offices, all marble and mahogany, where his clerks were shivering like the doves in Virgil. He stood tremendous in the entry and roared at them all: "You heard that? — Freeze me out! Eh? You heard it all of you? You heard it, I say?" The wretched head clerk answered "Yes," which was a lie. Mr Abbott's voice sank a little, but only a little, as the sea sinks when the tide turns in a gale. "Ah! You heard it all. That's better!" Then he went on again: "Freeze me out! Freeze out Charles Abbott of the Abbott Line! I'll wring all their necks!"

With that last pitiful, unpracticable, boasting threat, this mass of noise, this anachronism without strength or value, stooped to pass the low door, regained his sacred den, assumed his ancient wooden throne and sat there fuming for an hour.

Long after, at dinner that evening, he found himself muttering once or twice: "Freeze me out!" and he felt blood coming up into his face. But in the Plantagenet Club, westward four miles, wiser and stronger men were deciding what had best be done for the M'Korio, for their England, and indeed for Mr Abbott himself.

Far off in Norwood, Mr Burden slept.

## CHAPTER XI

IT was not altogether well with Mr Burden. Strong Englishmen, even in age, will not suffer in body (I think) through any mere disquiet of the mind. The thing was a coincidence, by which his silly doubtings mingled with some more serious physical ailment. But, whatever the cause, in those hot days immediately succeeding Cosmo's secret visit to Abbott's office, it was not altogether well with Mr Burden.

At first a chill, or perhaps a passing weakness, confined him to the house. Next he lost appetite, and betrayed an irritability quite unusual to him. His friends were heartily concerned. The Honourable the Rev. Peregrine Mauclerc called twice upon him, and left upon the last occasion a marked copy of the *Spectator*, containing a most interesting letter from the Rector's pen upon the subject of Hell, or Annihilation.

Not quite a week later, Mr Burden leant back at the table almost fainting, and it was evident that he could not go into the City.

It was a collapse, nothing more. It was believed that the necessary repose and a few days' nursing in the house would restore my poor old friend to health. Indeed, he was so restored, and might still be with us but for the accidents which I have yet to relate.

Though there was nothing definitely the matter, Mr Burden's wealth, and the value of his well-being to so many others besides himself, were sufficient to attract the aid of the medical profession.

Cosmo's profound, if silent affection was enhanced by the consideration that his father's position in the world, and ultimately his own, could not but benefit by a proper observation of rank and circumstance : for, with every hour he spent in the society to which his exceptional brain had given him entry, Cosmo learnt more and more the just weight of externals. Doctor Cayley was sent for, and Doctor, or (as he preferred to be called) "Mr" Gamble, the specialist. It was the practice of both these gentlemen to keep by them certain printed forms, and the moment they were called to the bedside of any distinguished patient, to fill in the blanks and post them to all the leading journals quite impartially, without distinction of party. Cosmo himself, with quiet dignity, gave notice of his father's illness, and of the

names of his medical attendants, to the *Morning Post*, the *Times*, the *Standard*, the *St James's Gazette*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Eagle*, the *Orb*, the *Mercury*, the *Star*, the *Daily News*, the *Chronicle*, the *Intelligencer*, the *Globe*, and several other papers whose great position compels them to print a Social Column.

Nor was Mr Barnett idle. The legend of his influence upon the Press I have already dispelled; but a man of such weight in our commonwealth could not be heard without respect, and a few messages from him created a profound impression upon the many editors who had tasted his hospitality.

Apart from all this it chanced that all the proprietors, and most of the wealthier readers of the principal organs of opinion were interested in the M'Korio Delta; thus, from one source and another, by a gradual accumulation of impressions, each perhaps insignificant, Mr Burden's illness became the theme of very serious public comment. Short leaders appeared; there were pathetic kindly notes; a fine letter from "Cantab" in the *Telegraph*, and in the *Spectator* a touching poem—a lovely little thing whose literary merit lent it but a part, and that not the most considerable, of its distinction and depth of feeling.

Nor was Mr Burden's name printed alone.

With every sympathetic reference to his condition, some gracious word would be added in recognition of his intimacy with Mr Barnett, or of what England owed him for having given her such a son as Cosmo. In papers of the wider circulation an allusion to the M'Korio Delta, which was now daily mentioned in at least two places of each issue, gave zest and meaning to the well-meant and charitable wishes expressed for Mr Burden's recovery.

Within five hours the two medical men arrived at Norwood, and found there, already at the door, Sir N. Lewison, whose European reputation, ever at the service of Mr Barnett, was never better employed than now. Indeed, Mr Barnett had lent the great surgeon the cream and blue Pompadour car wherein to make the visit.

The three learned gentlemen proceeded to the bedroom, where they found Mr Burden sunk in a refreshing sleep.

Gently waked by the soft gesture of the nurse who was in attendance, his condition, especially as regarded his heart, lungs and liver, was examined with all the marvellous skill that modern science has achieved; and when the principal features of his case had been accurately ascertained, the doctors retired into a neighbouring dressing-room to hold a

short consultation which should decide the treatment of their patient.

In the opinion of Sir Nathan (who spoke first), the arthritis was cardiac, or, at the very least, arterial. He cited Pilkington's note upon Levasseur's case, and quoted several exceptional things of the sort which had come within his own experience; notably his attendance upon the Hereditary Grand Duke of Lowenburg. With this conclusion, Dr Cayley found himself wholly unable to agree; and, being a man of humble origin,[1] who had risen by personal merit alone, he expressed his difference of opinion in the strongest language. He saw in the whole matter a very simple case of lesion in the biliary ducts, a view wherein he was supported by Dr, or rather Mr Gamble, the great specialist; the latter was, however, unable to avoid a reference to his favourite topic of the greater lymphatics.

The baronet (for Sir N. Lewison had been raised from the knighthood on the occasion of his services to the child of the Duke of Essex) was too much of a man of the world to meet violence with violence, and, after all, possessed a science deep enough to discover that the differences between them were of no ultimate effect upon the patient's treatment.

[1] Dr Cayley's father was old "Honesty" Cayley, twice Mayor of Bletchton.

When an agreement had thus been reached, they all three re-entered the room. Cosmo joined them, and Dr Cayley, as the doyen of the faculty, took it upon himself to reassure Mr Burden. In an inaudible tone, such as the presence of an invalid demands, he gave instructions to the nurse that the patient should be kept quiet, and should not be allowed to rise until he felt completely rested. For diet they prescribed the viands and beverages which Mr Burden was in the habit of consuming, and so passed downstairs into the hall, still discussing the interesting technical aspects of his disorder, balancing, as they did so, their eyeglasses between the fore and middle fingers of their right hands—a gesture, most unconscious and natural in Dr Cayley and Mr Gamble, and so well caught by Sir Nathan as hardly to betray the effort of imitation.

The envelopes presented to them by a servant contained the customary fees; and, after many warm hopes for the swift recovery of his father, they took leave of Cosmo, and left the house to convalescence.

I have dwelt at this length upon the medical direction given by men of such eminence, not only to show, as it is my duty to do, the filial regard of Cosmo, but also to furnish an ample explanation of his conduct at Avonmore during

THE THREE DOCTORS

the illness; for, had not the confirmed opinion of these high authorities assured him that his father's indisposition was but temporary, he would never have pursued the course which some severe critics have blamed, but which I can only praise. As it was, he felt himself justified in calling a certain number of chosen guests daily under his roof, and in undertaking, to some extent, the management of his father's affairs; he was confident, moreover, that Mr Burden, on his approaching recovery, would absolve him of all indiscretion, and commend him even for his most speculative decisions.

It was announced with pardonable exaggeration (but only in the daily papers whose pages we hardly recall in our hurried modern life) that Mr Burden, though still in feeble health, was able to direct his affairs from the sick room; and Cosmo did not hesitate, with a commercial courage which the future justified, to use his father's name in several important expressions of opinion. He wrote also to the Press, above his own signature, twice within the space of a week, strongly supporting an attitude of the Directors which had been unduly criticised, and emphasising, with a fine indignation, the treachery of the unpatriotic crew who used his father's name at a moment when the great merchant was unable to attend the meetings of the Board. Indeed,

it may truly be said that, at this moment when Mr Burden's body was most removed from the affairs of the M'Korio, his spirit was omnipresent in a way it had never been until that moment; his credit and position, which were of such incalculable advantage to that Imperial venture, were never so strongly before the public as at the moment when Cosmo, for his own wise ends, was speaking in the old man's name.

The splendid hospitality which the house at Norwood displayed at this moment was of importance equally critical. Not that the parties were large, but that this distant villa, which hitherto had seen few visitors, and those of but a humdrum sort, now received men upon whose capital or judgment, the principal affairs of our time are conducted. In a few days the public rumours of Mr Burden's dissensions utterly died away, and the old man's solid career became in the general estimation the pivot of the whole M'Korian scheme. So true is it that Providence does with us more than we mean! For Mr Burden, passing the days upstairs between sleeping and waking, glad that his son should be seeing something of companionship during this difficult period of his illness, would never have had the tenacity or the judgment to use his own influence as well as it was used by Cosmo for him.

The strong constitution which Mr Burden had inherited, and which he had carefully preserved, stood him in good stead during the course of his little illness. Ten days after he had taken to his bed, that is, upon August 23rd, he felt himself again ; he could eat heartily, he read with a clear judgment, and he might, had he not wisely deferred to the opinion of the faculty, have left the house and gone about his business.

His doctors, however, with the double object of permanently curing their patient and of advancing the science they adorned, determined to defer his return to business.

With his physique, and under these conditions of increasing strength, the analysis of his malady became more and more difficult. His medical advisers determined therefore to prescribe a potion, whose virtue it was so to lower the action of the heart and to befog the brain, as to bring its recipient to a state the pathology of which is common knowledge throughout the profession. Thus artificially reduced to a condition which would indeed be morbid, but the familiarity of which would permit them to agree upon its nature, they could proceed from the known to the unknown, they could build up a definite basis, they could cure thoroughly, and they, the great scientists

hoped, at the same time, to observe what organ it was that had failed their patient, and had yet eluded their consummate powers of observation.

A drug was therefore administered to him by the nurse, and he was told, as invalids must ever be, that it was but a harmless tonic. She advised him, if he felt inclined for sleep in the afternoon, to take a full rest: and, having thus carried out her instructions to the letter, the excellent woman went out for a few hours' well-earned recreation, and left her sufferer to repose.

But when he had drunk his medicine, Mr Burden felt an odd fancy for the sun. The window of his great bedroom looked north, and he could see the summer light upon the trees beyond; for the doctors had left him at eleven, and it was noon. He ordered a servant, therefore, to take his deck-chair down into the conservatory, upon the southern side of the house: a greenhouse opening out of the drawing-room, of which indeed it formed a part, being separated from it only by a curtained archway supported upon columns in the Corinthian manner. Just round the corner of this arch, lying with a book in his hand which he would not read, and covered with a light rug, he felt a drowsiness not wholly pleasing come upon him, and fell into a curiously hard and uneasy slumber.

. . . . . .

Whatever rules the world, it is not we.

An hour later, Cosmo brought Mr Barnett home to lunch, as had been his custom during all these days. The meal was short: they feared to speak at the dining-table lest they should wake Mr Burden, whose bedroom was immediately above. To avoid disturbing him, they went into the drawing-room together, to talk at ease upon the subject which most absorbed them; and Mr Barnett, in whom something of the artist lingered, watched with pleasure the contrast of strong light striking the darkened room like a shaft from the greenhouse beyond.

They spoke frankly one to the other, as is the fashion of honest men, when they believe themselves alone, and near them, in his chair beyond the archway, Mr Burden lay steeped in an unnatural slumber. Of what they said to each other I know nothing; but I have heard minutely the description of the phantasmagoria which passed through the brain of Mr Burden as the physic took effect.

He seemed to be now here, now there, but always in a place of very bright colours and strong scents under a hot sun; and, though the scene continued to change, it had always one thing in common, an expanse of marsh

and reeds and stagnant, slimy, steaming water: tropical, and deadly to mankind. And up and down this horror there passed, with movements that corresponded to clouds in his own brain, great animals, now fantastic, as Wyverns, now of nature as hippopotami and sloths, but always having in their expression, when they turned towards him, something of the terrible.

Gradually in this place there were voices; one voice he recognised for that of his son, the other he could not fix; he knew it and then he did not know it; it pulsated between extremes of recognition almost absolute, and again of a complete bewilderment. At last he thought that he could attach a name to this second voice, a name that began, he thought, with an N; but the mere attempt at thinking so pressed upon and tortured him, that his poor soul abandoned itself again to the mere watching of the confused and painful delirium. And one voice, which was that of his son, was speaking perpetually of fools, and of old fashions, and saying that he knew them, as though he were proud of knowing them; and the other voice kept on insisting that something or other must be done, and boasting of strength and of power. Then the first voice, Cosmo's again, passed into another phase, and entreated and cajoled; and the second voice

seemed only to sneer, and, in some astonishing incongruous way, the name of his friend, the name of the friend he had lost, the name of Mr Abbott, came once and again upon the sufferings of this poor old man, and mixed grotesquely with those other vague and awful things. And he heard a repeated reference to an approaching death, and, on the other side, a repeated sneer that death kept no certain hour.

Through all this tortured hour of vision the body and the soul of him were not only in an agony, but in an anarchy as well; for the intellect was broken and did not reign. He was entranced, and could not judge, but only hear and see things quite inconsequent.

Then came the twilight whereby the soul of a man escapes from darkness. It came rapidly. First he could smell distinctly, it was the smell of an excellent cigar; then, with his eyes half closed, he saw a daylight which he knew was not the cheating glare of his unnatural sleep, and, with every moment, he caught the outer senses more and more.

Mr Burden's head was fuddled: he might have been asleep and dreaming painfully, or he might have heard spoken words: false or true, he could not comprehend them thoroughly. Even in health he would not have followed all their meaning. Now they left upon him but

a confused impression of inward desolation and misery, which interwove with his physical exhaustion and with the dull ache and ill-ease of his body.

He opened his eyes and saw the realities of our world. He recognised in a row of pots before him the *Primula Robinsoniensis*, and the *Ranuncula Japonica*, his gardener's pride. Still motionless, but more and more alive, he noted the long lines of soot and grime upon the glass, the bubbles of dried paint upon the woodwork, and, on a corner of the iron frame of the conservatory, the stamp of the makers, "Aurora Works," and the situation of their industry, the Isle of Dogs. He stared at the empty stove, and knew himself and his name.

He was broad awake. There were truly voices in the next room; they were those of Mr Barnett and of his son. So much was real, but the marsh and the monsters had vanished. . . .

Cosmo's voice, rapid and low, he could not easily follow, but he caught the words "You can't . . . How can you possibly? . . . must manage my father."

Then a protesting series of earnest appeals and an exhortation: "Not that way . . . not that way."

His son's voice and manner were so familiar

to him, that Mr Burden almost saw the shake of the head as he listened. But he could understand nothing. Then again came Mr Barnett's voice, very deep and regular and slow.

"All that I cannot onderstand . . ." It thus interrupted Cosmo twice, and came at last impatiently and steadily. "So it most be settled! So!" And he heard a heavy hand come down by weight, and without violence, upon the arm of a chair.

It occurred to Mr Burden suddenly that, though he was listening to gibberish, yet he was listening unseen. To a character of his simplicity, the thought was odious. I do not say it to ridicule him. In a way it does him honour that he did not wish to be an eavesdropper; and his desire to reveal himself was the more laudable and just from the fact that he could make no use, and indeed no sense, of what he overheard.

He shifted awkwardly and wearily from his invalid's chair, stood up, somewhat dizzy for the moment, and coughed as men do purposely on the stage; he was not heard. Mr Barnett had just repeated with emphasis the phrase: "This fellow Âppott," when, with that reminiscence of his trouble full in his ears, Mr Burden stood in the open archway which led from the conservatory to the room.

He held to a curtain, as though for support. Mr Barnett stared at him, and Cosmo seeing such a look in his companion's eyes, swung round sharply and, in his turn, saw his father. He leapt at once to his feet and caught the old man's arm.

"Where have you been?" he cried. Then he remembered his duty, and said, more gently, "Where's the nurse?"

Twenty surmises ran through his head. He thought perhaps the old man was wandering—and he thought of many other things. And, during this very awkward pause, Mr Barnett, whose great energies could ill brook interruption, stared at the father and the son in the doorway: the lower part of his strong face was thrust forward, his eyes vivid with protest. But he did not say a word, and Cosmo was glad he did not.

Then Cosmo himself added, this time quite gently:

"You might kill yourself! You were not allowed to move after your medicine. . . . You must let me do everything."

The old man did not resist at all; he was led across the room by Cosmo, past Mr Barnett, at whom he feebly smiled, and from whom he received no smile in return but still that powerful indignant glance, and as he stumbled by:

THE UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE OF MR. BURDEN

"I was asleep," he murmured. For the only time in his life he was not believed.

Cosmo led him upstairs again to his room. His father slept again, but Cosmo waited till the nurse returned. He took her aside and spoke to her in such a fashion that she determined to leave that roof—a decision she wisely postponed. Then he went down, bracing himself as best he could to find Mr Barnett.

To his very considerable annoyance, Mr Barnett had gone. He ran down to the gate and looked up Alexandrovna Road; but, if the distant Panhard he saw was that of the financier, it had gone too far for recall. He went back to the house, up the drive, moodily; he stood gazing for some minutes at the chair in the conservatory, he paced and calculated the distance between it and the place where he and Mr Barnett had sat; then he went and stood by the window and looked out for a long time in silence, wondering at, and misreading, everything.

. . . . . .

With that unpleasant little episode, a mischance which only the imperfect sympathies of the various parties to it had exaggerated, Mr Burden appeared to recover in a final manner.

His rapid restoration was due, in part, to the physicians, who found his symptoms far easier

to analyse under the effects of the drug than they had been during the complex reactions of his convalescence; and in part to the curious obstinacy of the old man himself who, with a vivid memory of their last experiment, successfully refused to touch another spoonful of medicine. Under the combined influence of their science and his mother-wit, he was within three days dressed and about the house. Within a week he was walking out daily, and soon manifested that revolt against restraint, which is but the return of an active and working brain to its normal functions.

As Mr Burden could spend more and more of the day downstairs, Cosmo rightly thought it less and less his duty to waste his time at home. Such was his zeal in his new-found opportunities for work, that he would leave the house before his father had been permitted to rise; and the recreation necessary after a long day, not to speak of private calls which had to be made upon other members of the original syndicate, commonly prevented his return until long after his father was asleep.

In these days, therefore, which just preceded Mr Burden's reappearance in the City, he saw but little of his son.

Of Mr Barnett he saw and heard even less, on account of that deplorable imbroglio with

which my reader is already acquainted. The interval was short. It was but a fortnight after the scene in the drawing-room, that the doctor gave Mr Burden leave to resume his business activities; but the continued loneliness and silence had borne upon him very heavily.

I myself saw him in those days, and I myself was deceived by his reaction towards health. I did not comprehend, nor did anyone comprehend, how deep was the wound which even so short an illness and one of so indeterminate a nature could inflict upon such a character as Mr Burden's, a character already shaken by doubt and continual nameless perplexities.

We could all see that he had been thrust suddenly beyond the boundary of old age, but we could not see the further thing: I mean, that he was very near to the last fall of all; that any sudden blow might be his end.

That blow was delivered, of course, by the blundering hand of the unpardonable Abbott.

. . . . . .

It will readily be perceived that, with a man of Mr Abbott's temper, the great forces of modern England would breed, not only a reactionary hatred, but a mania for suspicion.

The man was for ever putting two and two together. He was perpetually seeing con-

spiracies where no conspiracy existed, nay where no conspiracy could, in the nature of things, exist. He would smell out the secret influences of what he called "cosmopolitan finance," in the actions of the dullest and most orderly of civil servants. He had dropped one newspaper after another, proceeding on a scale, as it were, from the fairly sane to the hopelessly fanatical. At last he had come to reading none, with the exception of a weekly sheet which not only floundered into every mare's nest of politics, but was largely supported by subscriptions from Mr Abbott himself.

With such a temper attaching to the ordinary affairs of the State; with a view of the occupation of Egypt (for example) that it was provoked by a group of bankers and scripholders; with the confirmed opinion that the problems of the Irish Land were principally due to the greed of English moneylenders—with every illusion a belated radical can nourish, it is not wonderful that Mr Abbott, the moment difficulties of any sort threatened himself, should have positively raved.

A man of quieter temper would have known that Cosmo's strong and virile attitude during the moment of their short interview was a piece of very legitimate *finesse*. A man who could see modern commerce as it is, would

have admired the young man for the attempt, but would have known how little strength lay behind it.

You cannot "freeze out" a man in Mr Abbott's position. A shipowner, a prosperous member of the most prosperous trade in England, has no paper floating about that you can buy up; the investment of his savings are not commonly in such securities as even a group of enemies can largely affect. The principal weapons of that engrossing warfare which is the crusade and school of knighthood of our day, are useless in shipping circles. Freights are still a sort of neutral ground in the fierce contest of high souls, and will so remain until one dominating brain shall have pooled the interests of the main lines, frozen out the tramps, and unloaded the shares of a Trust upon legislators in such a manner as to forbid the interference of Parliament.

In spite of the strength of his position, however, Mr Abbott's suspicions raged. A Government contract which lay between him and the Excelsior Line fell to the Excelsior. He employed two men at Somerset House for five days to discover the shareholders of the Excelsior, and of the syndicate that was behind the Excelsior, and of the investing company which was the principal holder of the syndi-

cate :—and so forth. He got very little for his pains ; but he remained convinced that some influence allied to the M'Korio had defrauded him.

A cargo of which he had made certain at Barcelona failed him, and the ship came home in ballast. The innocent name of the worthy Spaniard who had been unable to oblige was darkly connected in his mind with Mr Harbury.

He had great difficulty in effecting an insurance upon the *Polecat*. He was asked a rate which he would not pay, and she went out uninsured. More than three weeks overdue in the customary run to the Plate, he did at last reinsure at thirty-five guineas ; the very next day she appeared, apologetic but undamaged, in the river. If Mr Abbott had dared, he would have talked of bribery.

A succession of small incidents such as these, incidents which in fifteen days had hardly cost him £15,000, had driven Mr Abbot quite off his balance ; and it happened that, on the evening before Mr Burden was to return to his business, Mr Abbot sat down and wrote to Norwood a letter as mad as ever man wrote ; but in such terms as have since, I am glad to say, been found indictable before a common jury.

I must offer a passing apology for printing

it; it is the business of a recorder to record, and I am impelled to put down even this offensive extravagance.

The letter reached Avonmore by the first post of Monday, the 3rd of September. It came with a batch of others on that morning when Mr Burden had determined to return to town; the morning of a day upon which he was expected to see, for a moment a least, his fellow Directors at the offices of the M'Korio.

The merchant came down to breakfast cheerily, with a deceptive thin veneer of health. He sat at his table assuming the airs of old (Cosmo had long been gone); he opened his correspondence envelope by envelope. The first, second, and third, were circulars; the fourth was a wedding card, the fifth a prospectus; he saw next Mr Abbott's handwriting, and his mind changed, darkened, and grew cold, as does a plain in early summer when a snow cloud comes above it from the hills. He opened the envelope and read these words:—

"My Dear Burden,

"I don't mind your being hand and glove with a greasy German Jew, nor your toadying a jointed hop-pole like that bankrupt Benthorpe; and as for Cosmo coming into my office and threatening me, I only mind just so much

as to prevent him ever coming there again. But what I will not have is that any of your dirty gang should interfere with my business; and if another ship of mine goes wrong in any way, I warn you, and you can warn your Lords and your Jews and your Cabinet Ministers, that I will sink the cost of another ship in smashing the lot of you. I write to you because you are the only one I know, and you may take it from me that I shall not write again."

Such was the letter.

There are many things in this mad scrawl which I should digress a moment to ridicule and condemn, were it not more germane to the spirit of my record to pass them by in contemptuous silence. But there is one phrase which I cannot treat with the neglect it deserves. I mean the phrase about Lord Benthorpe.

The abominable meanness in a man of Mr Abbott's wealth harping on the poverty of a superior is not my theme: it is enough to say that, had the cases been reversed, Lord Benthorpe would never have descended to expose the misfortunes of Mr Abbott. I have rather to comment upon the word "bankrupt."

By the time the matter comes into court, it is probable (considering the dilatory habits of Mr and Mrs O'Rourke) that my work will be

regarded as the standard account of Mr Burden's life. I am in possession of this precious epistle. It is before my eyes as I write, and I desire to put it publicly, with all my special knowledge of the circumstances, at the service of the perfect gentleman whom he has wronged.

Mr Abbott will find, I think, that our English law of libel is strong enough and flexible enough to punish most heavily the use of such a term. His lordship never has passed, nor, please God! ever shall pass, through the Bankruptcy Court. Of his unfortunate lack of means I have already spoken—I trust as delicately as possible—nor have I concealed from my readers the ready help and sympathy he received from his friends in the financial world. But between honourable poverty and defalcation, both English law and English sense draw a sharp line, as the slanderer will discover to his cost.

I will dwell no more upon the point. It is not the fashion of the Island Race to pre-judge a matter which is so soon to fall beneath a judge: Mr Justice Hopper, for many years a strong supporter in Parliament of the Water Companies and the National Party.

. . . . . .

When Mr Burden had read Abbott's shameful words, though he had not yet gathered all

that they implied, and was rather stunned than wounded by them in the first moment, a look of age passed over his face: that look which was to return once or twice in the next few hours, and each time to mean that on his soul was blowing a sharp gust of death.

He laid his left hand heavily upon the table, sighed, and picked up his remaining letters and opened them. One was a receipted bill from his wine merchant; the next a letter from his daughter, Mrs Legros, asking for money: the parish was a poor one, and they had to feed the lambs. . . . Clarence, moreover, was suffering from measles, and Billy needed a watch. The next was a circular from a company which desired to cover his floors, not with carpets, but with a kind of cheap linoleum; he frowned and threw it in the fire. The next was the reminder letter of summons to the meeting of the Board of Directors which was to be held in Broad Street, that afternoon, at four. Methodically he put the hour down on a piece of paper, folded it and slipped it into a waistcoat pocket; but his hand trembled as he did so, and the hour he put down was wrong. The next letter was an appeal for funds from a society for the Prevention of Evil, two more were about American quack medicines, and the last was an angry note from a local tradesman

whose goods (so Mr Burden's housekeeper constantly maintained) had neither been ordered nor received, and were therefore left unpaid for.

When he had read all this, his correspondence, Mr Burden's left hand stretched out again, his eyes not following it, and unsteadily took up Mr Abbott's letter. He read it a second time.

Its ridiculous language could touch no chord of humour, for all those chords were silent; nor of resentment, for the man was already broken. Cold senile tears gathered in his eyes; he put the letter down again, and gazed across his lonely table at the window and the grey London sky without. Then, at last, he rose with a determination in his heart.

As he went through the hall and groped a little too long for his hat, his housekeeper, a woman who had been with him since his wife's last illness, bade him not go out, telling him he was not fit to try even the summer air, still less attuned to business; but, by his expression and manner, it was evident that none of these things mattered to him at all.

He was opening the door with the intention of walking directly to the station, when the bell rang, and he saw, upon the step without, a man whom he had known for many years: a Mr Hale.

Mr Hale greeted him with respect, and Mr Burden, after looking at him some time before speaking, as is the way with men who suffer either in body or in mind, took him by the arm almost familiarly, and said :

"Come with me, Mr Hale, and say whatever you have to say as I go down to the station."

Mr Hale was overwhelmed by so much condescension—for Mr Hale was of no position in the world.

This citizen was an excellent example, not only of what human industry may do against harsh conditions, but also of the squalls of evil fortune which overtake merit even in its hours of success.

His father had been a rag-and-bottle merchant and dealer in kitchen-stuff during the 'fifties, and had plied his trade in a very little shop so near to Mr Burden's house as to be a capital *débouché* for the perquisites of the cook. He left sufficient capital at his death for his son to set up as an undertaker : a public servant the necessity of whose presence was then increasingly felt in the growing and prosperous suburb.

In this trade Mr Hale, junior, did very well for some time. He enlarged his premises, and put in his window the striking sign of a coffin accompanied by the words, "Simplicity,

Despatch, Economy and Reform," the last of which abstractions had, until recent years, seemed peculiarly congenial to the political spirit of the neighbourhood.

Mr Burden had first come to know him in connection with the death of a young man, a neighbour, of whom he had been in a sort of way the guardian ; he had later entrusted him with the mortal remains of Mrs Burden.

But, shortly after that memorable date, misfortune overtook the hitherto prosperous purveyor. The increased facility of communication caused many of his clients to turn for the last rites to larger firms in the centre of London, and even to entrust their lifeless clay to the limited companies which had begun to compete with the smaller capitalists of the profession. The practice of cremation also, increasing somewhat in favour with the middle classes, had cut into his profits ; and two years of exceptional local health, during which his permanent expenses could not be reduced, had eaten up his little reserve. More than once he had undertaken a few jobs of cabinet work for Mr Burden, who was ever ready to help those around him ; but this kind of job had to be done under the rose, as being beneath the dignity, and, indeed, opposed to the rules, of the Society to which Mr Hale belonged.

In the last few weeks things had become desperate with him; and, to tell the truth, he was approaching Mr Burden upon this occasion for the loan of £10.

I have no space to detail the conversation which passed between the two, and I can only plead my old friend's great weakness, the recent destruction of his whole stamina and nerve, as an excuse for his acceding to Mr Hale's request. It was against all his principles, as it must be against those of every sober reader of these lines, to lend money.

He lent it because he was in that mood of mixed softness, abandonment, and sadness, which so often precedes a catastrophe.

They parted outside the station, Mr Hale with overwhelming thanks and repeated promises of repayment, Mr Burden gazing at him as though at some memory of the past, then saying:

"Good-bye, Mr Hale," and he said it with as much affection and solemnity as though he were bidding farewell for ever to one of his oldest friends.

Mr Hale smiled in a terrified manner and departed; Mr Burden went down the stairs, took his train, and sat silent all the way into town. For the first time in I know not how many years he held no newspaper in his hands.

When he came to the City he went directly to Leadenhall Street, and, purposely passing the little familiar archway which led to his friend's private room, went in at last by the great public entrance of Mr Abbott's offices.

But as the big plate-doors swung to, he felt something mortal upon him.

## CHAPTER XII

MR BURDEN stood at the counter where little rails of shining brass were reflected in the polished wood. He looked for some immediate obedience; but his aspect at this moment was not such that his wealth or station could be seen.

Mr Burden stood at the counter with both his hands upon it, waiting till someone should notice that he was there. Such duties are reluctantly undertaken by the youngest of a company, and there approached him at length a young clerk with pale and curly hair, watery blue eyes, and of a frank, uncivil manner, as though his heart were in the right place but very small.

Mr Burden said to him:

"I want to see Mr Abbott."

With easy negligence the young clerk shoved across the counter a form on which was printed:—

Name of applicant.....

Nature of business.....

Mr Burden looked at this form a moment, and then lifting his head :

" Give him my name," he said.

" What *is* yer name."

" Burden . . . Mr Burden. Tell Mr Abbott Mr Burden is here, and wishes most particularly to see him."

The young clerk sauntered off with a careless ease, and Mr Burden stood waiting at the counter. His face was very pale, his manner unsteady. Beyond, in little pens of glass, ill-paid men, working at books, peeped furtively ; some smiled, others looked round to catch a neighbour's eye. Mr Burden was oblivious of it all.

The young clerk returned and said, as a servant in livery speaks to a tradesman in none:

" Mr Abbott can't see you."

Patches of colour lit up in Mr Burden's face ; but, before he spoke or moved, a little dry, grey man who had served his master faithfully for twenty years, and to whom Mr Burden was as familiar as the City streets, had seen what was passing and had come forward. He pushed aside the very foolish youth, and said in a low, respectful voice :

" You had much better wait a little, Mr Burden, sir ; you had indeed."

Mr Burden shook his head slowly. He took

up an office pen and wrote a few lines upon a memorandum sheet. He folded it and put Mr Abbott's name outside. . . . "Take him that," he said, "I must see him."

What he had written I do not know; but I am assured that the address was almost illegible, so violently did his hand tremble.

The little grey man went off in some fear. He was not long away. When he came back, he bore in his hand the same note, unopened. "I am very sorry, Mr Burden, sir," he said, most anxiously . . . "indeed, if you will let me . . ."

Mr Burden took the note from him and tore it into twenty pieces methodically and strongly, and scattered them upon the floor, casting them deliberately down like seed to grow up into some remorseful harvest. Then, the little grey man watching him anxiously as he went, he passed through the monumental doors into the street.

It was with a most unnatural energy that he pushed through the crowds on the pavement. His emotion forced a spasm of life through the worn channels of his brain; he walked rapidly, his head bent down, till he came to Broad Street and the offices of the M'Korio. The giant saw him as he passed up the great stairs and saluted him, but Mr Burden noticed nothing. He went on at once to that principal

room, where he knew that a meeting of the Board was to be held, and into this room he strode, full of purpose, but checked a moment by the presence of others as he entered.

He saw by the window the little group which, as he thought, had ruined his peace for ever, and, among them, he saw Cosmo. He saw Cosmo standing as a friend of theirs should stand, talking with them familiarly.

They were four: Cosmo and Mr Barnett, Lord Benthorpe and Mr Harbury: their minds at ease on that quiet and sunlit afternoon, fresh with the activity of the City, ready for the action of life.

To each of them great fortune promised: and to Mr Barnett, who was already very wealthy, more than fortune — true political power, a thing to him worth all the effort of a life. They stood there at the window, these four men, making not only their own success, but the success of England, and building up yet another new people over seas. There was a natural buoyancy in all their attitudes; the hard work had been done, and only the last stone remained to be raised. Then the one would have recovered his honour, another have solved his indebtedness, another have found himself secure for the first time in

permanent wealth, another in retirement and leisure, and strong over men.

They knew, indeed, what phantasies and little meticulous rules had haunted this fifth man that had entered. They knew their Mr Burden by this time; especially Cosmo, his son, foresaw what effort had still to be gone through. But they had no doubt of success, for a man thus sensitive is also weak and very yielding to persuasion: nay, as he entered, that weakness of his was apparent, in the hesitation of his step and the uncertain glance which he cast upon them.

Cosmo hung back a little, for he revered his father. The three others came forward with effusion; Lord Benthorpe with perhaps rather more restraint than the rest; and Mr Barnett, taking it upon himself to be spokesman said:

"My dear Mr Burden!" and he took Mr Burden's hand in his right hand and put his left hand over it and held it fast, to show a real friendship; and then he pulled up to the table a great chair of dignity, and asked Mr Burden to be seated in it. Mr Burden said: "Thank ye": he sat down slowly, as would a man that bore a heavy sack upon his shoulders, and the rest sat down around the table.

After a little silence, Cosmo asked his father whether his train had been punctual. Mr Burden answered oddly. He said in a manner, which (alas!) still savoured of pomposity:

"Gentlemen . . ." Then he coughed and was silent.

Mr Barnett, who all his life had possessed the art of managing men, smiled a ready, but not convincing smile, and said:

"Eh, Mr Burten? Yes?"

Mr Burden, with a troubled look, and with eyebrows drawn together and upwards, looked round at them, avoiding the eyes of each, and gazed to his right at the window, as might a man who had the direction of a battle, but who knew nothing of war, and who saw the closing in of lines;—and fate, and dread, and ending coming forward upon him out of the smoke and clamour.

He turned his head slowly round; he shifted his feet nervously, and he began again:

"Gentlemen . . . I have been thinking . . . that there are some things . . . I don't say many . . . but still there are some things which might be settled without hurting us and without hurting anyone else, and . . . Of course I understand the position fully." He tried to smile and failed. "I am a man of the world, gentlemen; I understand the position

fully . . . I know it may be a little sacrifice . . . I think you will all agree with me it should be settled."

Mr Barnett, who all his life had possessed the art of managing men, cleared his throat, and spoke rapidly in a confident tone: his hands were clasped before him upon the table, his short creative thumbs were pressed together. He said:

"I think we exactly know what it is in Mr Burten's mind? It does Mr Burten to his honour. Mr Burten is alluding herein, Lord Bent'orpe" (for Mr Barnett always addressed Lord Benthorpe upon such occasions—and Lord Benthorpe bowed very slightly, as men do who owe nothing and can give much) "Mr Burten is alluding, Lord Bent'orpe, I say, to our policy with regard to Mr Åppott herein. Mr Burten, it does you much to your honour."

Lord Benthorpe, whose ignorance of all these things was that of a sincere and honourable gentleman, bowed again to Mr Burden: it was a very slight bow, even more slight than that accorded to Mr Barnett; and I am sorry to say that, immediately afterwards, he had the lack of tact to remark: "I am sure that any such small matter as Mr Burden wishes can be arranged."

Mr Barnett betrayed considerable irritation.

"With all respect due," he said—in spite of his accent, he had a great command of English idiom—"with all respect due, and ready, Lord Bent'orpe, and with every desire I have to spare——" here he hesitated a moment, and Mr Harbury, to whom English was a familiar language, murmured, "susceptibilities" — "susceptibilities," continued Mr Barnett, still pondering on all the syllables, "we have other interests herein than alone our own to consider. We have the interests also of the shareholders surely to consider. I think one will agree with me? Ah?"

He lay back a little in his chair, and looked round at his three companions, and then a little rapidly to his left at Mr Burden: Mr Burden was silent, and Mr Barnett went on:

"We have, I say also, the shareholder-interest to consider. If we had ourselves alone to safeguard so, we should be understanding Mr Appott's position; indeed, I am very sure. But" (and here Mr Barnett lowered his voice in a manner which would have been impressive even to a larger audience, and wagged his head gloomily): "But have we choice I fear . . .?"

He looked sadly a moment at the middle of the table, with an expression not unlike that of

an animal about to be sacrificed, then throwing up his hands with the palms outwards, said in a sudden return of native feeling :

" Ach ! God ! He hass not come in ! He hass not come in ! It is right on his own head, I say."

It was not often that Mr Barnett allowed a sudden revulsion of feeling to awaken in him the exclamations of his youth, but he felt strongly upon Mr Abbott's action ; he thought it stupid ; he thought it unbusiness-like. He thought it dangerous to the M'Korio Delta Development Co. He thought it, from what he knew of the English, un-English, and, during the few seconds of that angry phrase, a native phrase had returned to him, strongly borne upon a gust of natural passion.

Cosmo tentatively intervened :

" Perhaps, father, you could go and see Mr Abbott again ? " Mr Burden, hearing the voice of his son, and being thereby suddenly reminded of his home and of many years, looked up with an awful pain in his eyes.

" No," he said.

Then there was another awkward silence, which Lord Benthorpe did not much relieve by saying twice the words, " I hope, . . . I hope," and looking round with an uncertain smile.

Mr Harbury broke in, with the air of a man whose thought has matured; he leant his chin upon his left hand, and looked steadily at Mr Burden.

"Mr Burden, I think you will admit that Mr Abbott should have come in. If he does not come in, we are absolutely bound to oppose him with all our force. You see that as well as I do. You cannot justly complain if we destroy that which attempts to destroy us. You cannot justly complain if you refuse to persuade him further, and refuse also to help us in our self-defence against him. There is no possible third course."

All this was said fixedly and clearly, as Mr Harbury had long learnt to say the thing that should dominate a weak man's mind; but Mr Burden was so ill as to be perverse and irrational; and the anger that makes men drunk was rising up in him again.

He cried much louder than he had meant:

"I have said all I have to say."

His anger filled and impelled him; he kept control of his body to some extent, but no longer of his mind; and he continued still loudly, without reason, and forgetting his determination to be cold:

"I will not be a party to any intrigue against my friend!"

Now such are the limits of human nature, and such is its feebleness, that even men like Mr Barnett (who had known all his life how to manage men) can lose their steadfast poise in a sharp moment of wrath. He looked round smartly, he put his face somewhat too suddenly forward, as towards an opponent, and thrust into Mr Burden's already kindled fires the fuel of an insult.

Those two deep sunken lines which marked the financier's heavy cheeks like furrows and drew down the lowering corners of his mouth, were contracted into a kind of intense sneer: and he said, without opening his teeth:

"You will party be to your pocket whatever!"

Then Mr Burden, power bubbling up within him in spite of his age, in spite of his illness, and filled, in spite of his wealth, with a desire for freedom, cried out at him:

"Take care, Barnett, you're going a little too far, just a little too far . . . I wouldn't have that . . . not for worlds!"

Mr Burden's breath came very quickly, and he had his lips as closely pressed together as any had yet seen them, and his head was full with the blood of his anger. But there was anger in Mr Barnett also, though of another race and kind and climate; and he said with a

full sneer, where only half a sneer had been before :

"What can you do? So?"

I repeat, for the twentieth time, that Mr Barnett's knowledge of men had never failed him. He must not be judged on this exceptional case, nor condemned because he underestimated the follies that men like Mr Burden can commit, when their state of mind is such as was then Mr Burden's state of mind. For, a passion like a fighting passion possessed Mr Burden, and rioted through his aged and enfeebled body, forcing its organs beyond their power, and straining the material framework of his life. In that passion he had forgotten decent conduct; he had forgotten investments and all that investments should mean to a just and reasonable man. He repeated without moving:

"What can I do?" He said it two or three times in a low voice. He remembered a furious letter to the Press which he had not posted : he remembered his fear lest the Press should refuse to print it. He remembered his sufferings as the syndicate was preparing, he remembered his yielding, and what that yielding had cost him in the soul. He remembered above all Mr Abbott, Charles Abbott, his friend —and, remembering these things, he lost all control.

He snatched up his hat from the ground, and thrust it far back upon his head at random: he sprang upright: he held his chair tilted back with one hand; with the other he grasped his umbrella in a kind of swagger, tip to ground, as though it had been the scabbard of a sword. He seemed vigorous, or perhaps distraught: intoxicated with the words that rose in him.

Mr Harbury, whose judgment I will always trust in such matters, and who was once not unacquainted with the management of the stage, has told me that never in his life, not even in the Levant, had he seen so dramatic a passage of anger as was that of this old Englishman in the toils: all his respectable English dress was at random; his sober English gestures became those of a man who fights or labours; and it is a detail worthy of notice, that the bone stud at his throat broke as he started up, and that his collar went flying loose at random. He shouted at them:

"What can I do? Oh, I can do a great deal, I can! You, Barnett, and you, Harbury, and all of you! All!"

Perhaps he actually felt the presence of a crowd: the massed forces of this new world surging against him; he spoke as though to numbers.

"I can smash it! I can smash you, and your

MR. BURDEN IN HIS LAST UNFORTUNATE FIT OF PASSION.
(FROM A SKETCH VERY KINDLY PROVIDED BY MR. HARBURY)

precious shareholders . . . and, and the Duke . . . and the whole thing! I can go and say why I went! Eh? Oh! good Lord! and I shall print it. . . . If they won't print it in your cursed papers, I'll placard it; I'll cover the town with it; I'll put your names up high —all your names—your names that you hide, and the names that you have had and lost . . . swindlers and thieves and scum!"

And, after that outburst, he recovered himself a moment, and stood away from them, breathing too hard, while Mr Harbury looked down, and Mr Barnett smiled a drawn smile of hatred that would not betray fear.

Lord Benthorpe, a soldier in his youth, was very genuinely afraid; he was afraid of something indefinable, of catastrophe . . . he did not understand these things.

There passed through Mr Burden's mind a spasm of calm which he mistook for self-control; he fumbled at his collar trying to straighten it, he put on a civic dignity, and stood up stiffly, and turned to his son and said:

"Come with me, Cosmo."

Cosmo, whom this wild scene had distressed beyond bearing, looked down nervously at the table, shuffled the papers before him, and murmured almost inaudibly:

"Don't make a fool of yourself, father."

Then Mr Burden, stooping forward hurriedly, went out.

There was a full three minutes of silence, during which Mr Barnett's face looked like the face of one of those old and monstrous things, enormous, dug from Assyrian sands, while Mr Harbury coughed twice, and sidled his eyes uncertainly, and Lord Benthorpe twiddled his fingers upon his trembling knees.

Then Cosmo, still in confusion, desiring to see whether indeed he would ruin them all and desiring to be rid of the atmosphere of anger, got up and went out after his father.

. . . . . .

In the street another beam of those few which support the structure of human life crashed within him ; the old man's brief draft of energy ran out and was lost utterly.

The mechanical action continued ; he could pass through the crowds with whom he had mixed for fifty years, but he felt a growing tension of the brain and some such abandonment of grasp and power, as men feel who are drowning, and who lose their consciousness just before they drown.

A few steps behind him followed Cosmo, his son. Interests, more momentous than the life of one man, made it imperative to Cosmo that the M'Korio should not be betrayed. There

was just time for his father to give notice of disclaimer; there was ample time to visit some one of those newspapers that continued in spite of loss and a deserved unpopularity to attack our great scheme of Empire. The exchange was shut. There was time to ruin everything before the morning. Nor could Cosmo know what his father suffered: he followed in the interests of the M'Korio, and, happily, his father did not know that he followed.

There are duties of many kinds; and Cosmo was doing one of these many duties as best he knew.

He saw his father pass the statue of Mr Peabody, philanthropist, cross Cornhill, and King William Street, and make for the Cannon Street terminus; but Cosmo was a man to do his duty, when he did it, thoroughly: it is a habit to which he owes the great position he now enjoys.[1] He did not lose sight of Mr Burden until he had seen him actually enter the gates of the railway station; then only did he turn away, with heaven knows how much relief, and plan such recreation as was legitimately his after the strain of the last few hours. He sent first a telegram to Mr Barnett to reassure him, and then cast off all business and

[1] Honorary L.L.D. of Dublin: trustee of Holy Souls Hospital. P.G.M. of the A.G.O. and major in the volunteers.

went west, to spend the evening with such companions as he had previously engaged.

But Mr Burden, bowing under the increasing weight of his malady, hesitated as he went up to take his ticket. He had forgotten, and was at a loss in everything. He did not remember his season ticket; and, when he stood before the little window, an impatient crowd gathered behind him, cursing at his delay. He had forgotten even the name of the station for his home. The trained clerk was quick enough to meet the difficulty. He took the gold piece that the old merchant had put down, and gave him in exchange such a third-class ticket as would carry him to the very extremities of the suburban zone. Mr Burden looked at the unfamiliar name upon the paste-board and moved slowly on to the platform; a considerable volley from the long queue whom he had just released followed his shambling figure; till a wit at the head of it restored the public humour by giving him very publicly the title of Methuselah. Mr Burden, wandering vaguely towards the train, did not so much as hear.

On the platform the porters knew him, and, in spite of the colour of his ticket, opened for him a first-class carriage; one, with the ready courtesy of his kind, helped him to his place, then, turning, tapped his forehead and jerked

his thumb over his shoulder with a leer ; for Mr Burden was evidently very ill indeed.

In the train he sat, relieved by some repose, and conscious (in a blurred way) that an old man in the corner of a railway carriage was safer from insult and observation, than wandering on a platform, a thing for gibes.

He sat dully, his brows contracting now and then. The names of the stations pleased him, because they were familiar. He tried to remember their order, or at least the name of such as he had not yet reached ; but he could not. He was puzzled, and looked round at his fellow passengers, as though for help. They glanced at him above their papers, and saw that he was ill. They feared for the decencies. One, more refined than the rest, bolted out at the next stopping-place. The others defended themselves with silence, reading steady behind the bulwark of the evening papers.

The old man turned to the window beside them, and watched the stations and the people as the train went on. He saw the news upon the placards, flaring under the flaring lights. He recited the headlines slowly to himself. They were associated dimly, he knew not why, with anxiety ; they distressed him.

Then there was a little darkness and a

rumble, and he heard the name of Norwood. He recognised it at once, and got out, and stood irresolutely at the gate. The collector took the ticket out of his hand, and smiled. Mr Burden looked at him fixedly, wondering at his smile, and felt for a moment an angry wave of emotion. He took this man also for one of his enemies.

But a muddled feeling of pleasant association came after. He took him foolishly for a friend, and smiled and nodded in reply. Then, by pure instinct, such as animals have, he found the way towards his home.

He came up that familiar road, his head reeling, and a bond, as though of iron, oppressing it within; and, as he walked, he suffered some dull ache continually. His slow steps jarred him; and now and then those pulsating throbs that are Death's artillery preparing his attack, hammered at the walls of his being.

He kept to one line of the pavement to make more sure; and once he thought: "Perhaps I am drunk." For it flashed twice on him that he was something different from himself; and he mixed with a night forty years gone, when he had drunk a whole bottle of some kind of wine. He heard again his father's anger; and it seemed to him, in a fantastic way, that he was

THE SERIOUS INDISPOSITION OF MR. BURDEN IN THE TRAIN

about to meet that anger now—after all those years.

The functions of humanity were breaking down in him : memory, connection, harmony. Oh, poor Mr Burden! He had not known what was meant by the preachers when they preached ; he had not known what was before him when they talked of the Soul. Mr Burden had called it immortal in his recited creed, and very right had he been in so calling it, and he was to prove it right in astounding trials, but in so doing quite to pass beyond the meaning of his word or theirs.

He came up that familiar road : he saw the gates of his own house—they both stood white in the evening. Habit (or ritual) the mistress of men sane, the good nurse of the last hours, carried him stumbling beyond the first gate. He passed the lodge, and, stumbling still, he reached the steps at his door. Here the old man would have sat down, as beggars do, to rest, had not habit still sustained and preserved his manhood : for never in his life had he done so strange a thing as to sit upon the doorsteps of a house.

It was his house, and he was master of it. He felt in his pocket for a key, and found one. He tried the door with it ; but the key was too large. Many thoughts at once confused him,

for he was troubled by Pain and Mortality: Pain and Mortality wrestled with his failing manhood, to mount, to ride, to conquer. But they were not in the saddle yet. He was determined to open his own door. He fancied many things at once. That his door had changed, or the key. Of his home and himself he was still sure; but his key and his door had already entered that world where all things common change and mingle, and where some other things, less known, emerge quite fixed for ever. Of his home and himself, he was still sure. His key and his door were already passing; himself and his home were, alas! to follow.

As he grated at the door, a faithful servant of his, a woman of the name of Kate Hatteras, heard him, and ran and opened. He would have told her the miracle of the door and of the key, but Pain—now grown into the whole of himself and wrestling hard, a power that knew its aims—Pain constrained him. He groaned, and his servant supported him deftly with her laborious and dutiful arm, and there flashed between them that good bond of long acquaintance, and Charity came into this house and visited its dying master—the first of the last angels. And, after Charity, there came those three great spirits, whose Hebrew names

I never knew, but which are called in our language the Design, and the Mercy, and the Justice, of God.

Charity and the old servant helped him up the stair, soothing him; he would have still spoken of the key and of the door; he smiled with smiles that were those of a child or of a man in extreme old age. Then his pain returned, and he groaned; for the pain was in the head, where is the citadel of a man besieged. His keep was taken.

Once, during that last little pilgrimage, upon a landing, he stopped, and tried to speak some senile syllables. He wished to thank his companion courteously. No one else had been directly good to him and to his dissolving humanity in all these terrible hours; but, in the midst of his attempt, the key returned to him. He mixed the mention of it into his speech, frowned a little, and stopped.

"Come, sir," said that admirable woman, "come along; you'll be better, sir. Don't you take on; now don't 'ee"; for she had been born away from towns, and her duty, her service, her honour, her hard work, and her kind of English, were all one thing.

So he took comfort, in spite of his pain, and her help was his support; nor had he any other friend, from that moment until he died.

Mr Burden was put to bed, not only by this servant, but by another named Elizabeth, and by the knife-and-boot boy too, whose daily task was indeed accomplished before nine, but who commonly remained against orders till eleven, that he might enjoy communion with his kind. And all these three, Kate Hatteras, Elizabeth, and the knife-boy, were awed in the presence of this good man, whom God had made and preserved, and was now taking back from them, and from Upper Norwood, and from England.

The burden and the grotesque of their task wreathed up into the sublime; they felt like travellers over whom a mist is lifted until they see, startled, the majesty of great hills before them. Their souls were raised by the sharp apparent nearness of those awful gates, through which it was their high destiny also to pass at last. They saw revealed for another (they themselves had caught the revelation), the things which each of us is born to see, each at his own time, upon his dreadful day.

Kate Hatteras, resolute and exact, left the boy to watch, called a messenger by telephone, sent him to a nursing home near by, and, finding a cab, directed it to fetch, not this or that celebrity, but a doctor of the place in whom she had some confidence. Within an hour, she had in the house a nurse of some age and ex-

perience, but insufficiently refreshed with sleep; there came next all manner of appliances, and, soon after, the young doctor, nervous and smiling rhythmically, who went up to the room and gave Death a long particular name.

But Death could have no need of definition here. He was present with his most ancient titles, dominant upon a throne, ordering that infinite vast wherein the narrow walls of one poor human habitation were not seen, so tenuous were they. His armies at a summons filled the place all around: He was in his court and power.

The servants were bidden by Kate Hatteras to go and sleep. The doctor wrote some useless thing, and left it for the morning. It was past midnight. Kate Hatteras lay down in the dressing-room near by, where, some few days before, the consultation had been held; she lay down dressed, and slept, and dreamt of a lonely shore where twilight stretched out endlessly along dull sands by a silent sea. But next door, in his bed (and above him some text or other in a frame) lay Mr Burden, her good master, in the agony of that last steep beyond which, they say, is an horizon.

He muttered incoherently, with pauses of silence between, and the nurse, though lacking sleep, yet thought it her duty to watch. The

September night was chilly; a fire was lit. She sat rigid and staring at the fire, till, in a longer spell of silence, her head drooped; and she living, her living body in spite of her will, fell unconscious into repose. But round the dying man were other companions.

Now this, now that, out of the long past was with him; persons and things all trivial. He spoke twice of an order—then he would bid a clerk write something . . . to whom? He forgot the name . . . he forgot the name. He complained of his memory; then he sighed a little, and was still.

In a moment he turned, and began his muttering again. To many friends, long dead, he spoke of the key and of his honour, and of . . . of . . . he sought for a name that would fit at once a traitor and a lost friend, something evil in the world;—some spirit or other. Perhaps a son. The effort strained him; he groaned again and was silent. One fixed and harassing perplexity recurred. There was something being done against his will at home; some quarrel of judgment: the children surely —or was it a servant? His wife was there by the bedside, renewing some ancient domestic difference: . . . but there! he was willing to yield. Anything, anything to cool the press of fever that was gaining upon the turmoil

within him : yet he wished her nearer to him and understanding more, for he was very ill ; and he kept on whispering : "As you will, my dear, as you will." Then, almost aloud : "Don't go! . . . don't go without settling it, my heart!" But she was gone.

Mr Burden opened his eyes : he knew that he was awake : he saw the ceiling plainly, and the stucco pattern of it, above the dull light of the falling fire. His wife, the real picture of her, rushed into his mind ; he knew that she had gone that very moment, shutting the door and leaving him. He could not move, for something had snapped, and all was changing : he felt himself utterly alone.

Loneliness caught him suddenly, overwhelming him ; wave upon wave of increasing vastness, the boundaries leaping, more and more remote, immeasurably outwards with every slackening pulse at the temples. Then it was dark ; and the Infinite wherein he sank was filled with that primeval Fear which has no name among living men : for the moment of his passage had come.

*Sanctus Fortis, Sanctus Deus,*
*De profundis oro Te.*
*Miserere, Judex Meus,*
*Mortis in discrimine.*

Mr Burden's head jerked a little to the right, his jaw fell, his hands twitched and grew rigid. Mr Burden was dead.

. . . . . .

The dirty light grew in the east of the world, and lit without hope the labour and despair of the city; the masts and spars of the ships a long way off in the docks showed delicate and true. There was a little streak of murky rose which faded, and, without, one cameo noise and then another led on to the life of a new day. A bird among the black branches of the ruined smoky trees, a footfall in the road outside; a few more moments and the sound of wheels. It was Cosmo coming home.

His subdued, but rather husky voice, as he paid the driver, was carried on the rare morning; he dropped a coin to the pavement and it rang. Even the shaking key in the lock could be heard, though he turned it softly. He was careful for his father's repose, as he had always been when he came home after a night of pleasure with his equals. He pulled off his boots, not without many blunders, and went up the stairs noiselessly, holding the banisters well. He reached his room above, and lay down at once to sleep, half dressed, the sleep he needed.

An hour later, when it was broad day, the

nurse in the room with the dead man snored fitfully, stirred, and awoke. She started suddenly, as she looked round at what was in the bed. Then her long experience composed her, she did what she had to do, and went into the next room, not liking to be alone. Kate Hatteras woke at her touch ; and they watched together ; and only when they saw that the time had come did they rouse the household. The fires were lit for breakfast to be cooked, and someone called Cosmo and told him what had fallen in the night.

. . . . . .

Two days after, with reasonable pomp, they restored the body to the earth, in that part of the cemetery at Norwood where lay the vault he had purchased : just beyond the sections consecrated to the Roman Catholics and the Jews. Already, for some fifty-three hours, his spirit had returned to God who gave it.

Thus did they bury Emmanuel Burden, a dealer in hardware ; and his son inherited his wealth.

I have no fears for him at the Judgment Seat. He had borne with affection for more than twenty years the common trials of domestic life. He had brought up three children to maturity. He had dissipated nothing of his health or patrimony ; he had increased his for-

tune by sober and by honest means, and with it in some part the wealth of the country which he adored. He had voted consistently as he thought best for the interests of Britain, supporting Mr Gladstone's Administrations until the fatal year of 1885, and, since that date, concerning himself for the success of the Unionist or Conservative candidate. But Mr Burden is dead, and I do not quite see who there is to take his place.

Honest Englishman and good man—I wish I could have written of him in nobler terms.

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